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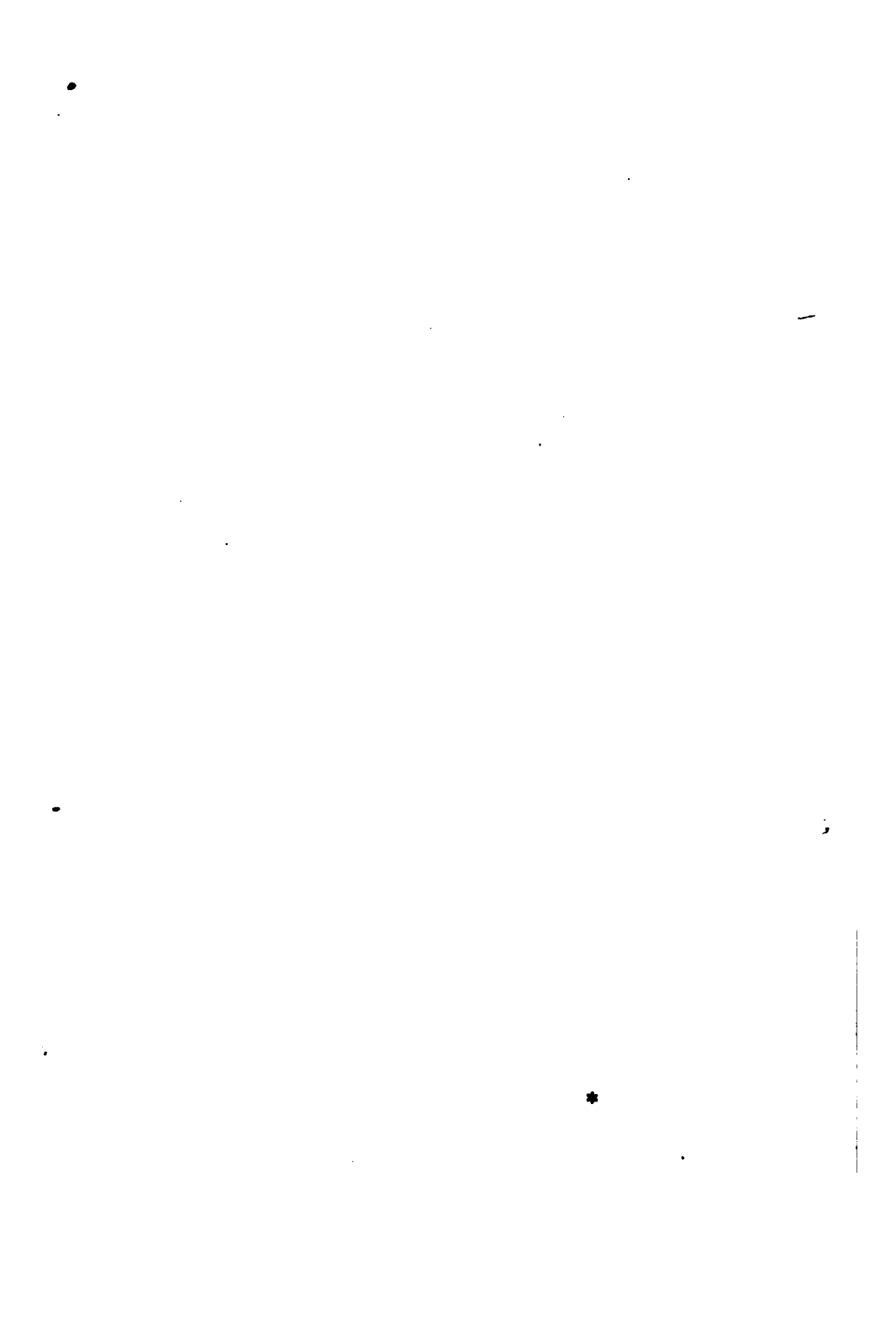
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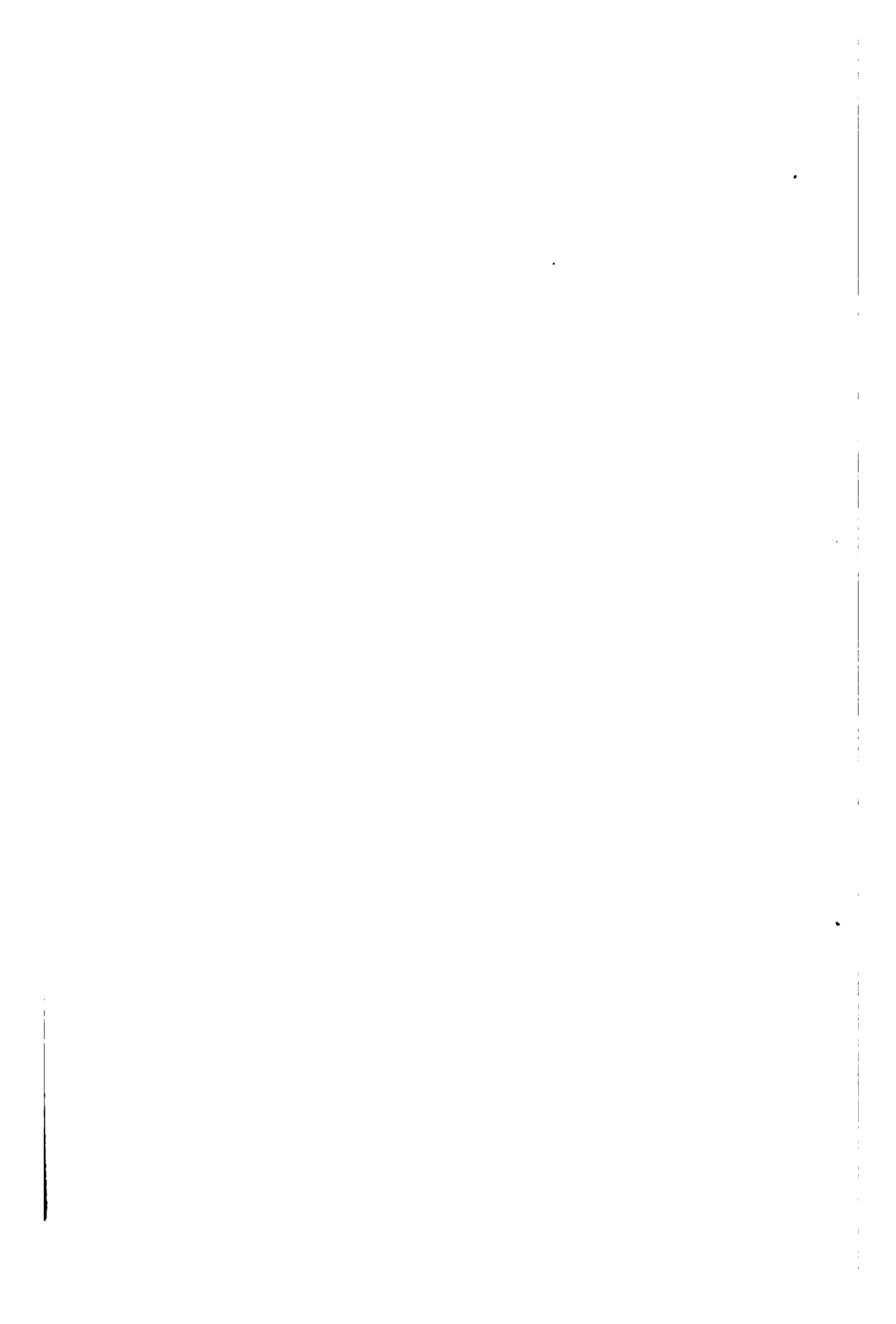
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# **COLONIAL MEMORIES**





6

# COLONIAL MEMORIES

BY  
LADY BROOME

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## NOTE

My cordial thanks are due—and given—to the Editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, within whose pages some of these “Memories” have from time to time appeared, for permission to republish them in this form. Also to the Editor of the *Boudoir*, where my “Girls—Old and New” made their *début* last season.

M. A. B.

*October 1904.*

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## A PERSONAL STORY

ALMOST the first thing I can remember is listening with fascinated interest to an old gipsy woman, who insisted on telling my fortune one summer afternoon on Cannock Chase long, long ago. I was very reluctant to undergo what seemed to me a terrible ordeal, but I was encouraged to do so by my nurse, to whom she had just promised "a knight riding over a plain." However, my Sibyl only touched on two points. First, she looked at my little hand and said: "I see a stream of gold flowing through your palm. Sometimes it runs full and free, sometimes scant and slow, but it is *never* quite dry." Then she doubled up my childish fingers and went on, "But this hand cannot close on money: you'll never be rich"—an utterance which has come exactly and literally true, and the remembrance of which has often been a comfort to me in hard times. Then she insisted on looking at the sole of my foot, and pronounced that it would "wander up and down the earth; north and south, east and west, to countries not yet discovered." She concluded by crying dramatically: "Earth holds no home for you, earth holds

and always wanted to talk of the dear distant land of their birth.

My own stay in India hardly lasted eight months, but I saw a great deal of the country in our four months marching through it. The camp broke up in March at the foot of the Himalayas just as the hot winds were beginning to make tent-life disagreeable. We then went up to Simla, and "Peterhof"—afterwards greatly enlarged and made into the Vice-regal residence—was taken as the headquarters of the R.A. staff.

In that beautiful spot the first great sorrow of my life came to me. I lost my kind, good husband there; and returned to England after less than a year's absence.

For the next four years I lived quietly with my two little sons among my own people, but in 1865 I met Mr. Napier Broome, a young and very good-looking New Zealand sheep farmer, who persuaded me to change the whole course of my life and go back to New Zealand with him! Certainly the influence of that old gipsy woman must have been very strong just then; and I often wonder how I could have had the courage to take such a step, for it entailed leaving my boys behind as well as all my friends and most of the comforts and conveniences of life. But at the time it seemed the most natural thing in the world to do, and we sailed merrily away

directly after our marriage in the summer of that year.

I tell elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> as well as in the following pages, the story of the three supremely happy years which followed this wild and really almost wicked step on our parts. The life was full of charm and novelty, though so venturesome; but at first it seemed as if love was not to be allowed to "be lord of all," for a crisis in the affairs of the Colony came just after the great snowstorm, and from one cause and another the value of real estate as well as of wool sank terribly. It was, therefore, with sadly diminished means we returned to England early in 1869, to be met by a chorus of "we told you so" from all our friends! However, we felt full of hope and courage, and set about at once seeking for some other means of livelihood.

My husband had always been very fond of literature, and had tried his hand more or less successfully at poetry. Still it was with great diffidence that he walked into Messrs. Macmillan's office one fine June morning in 1869 and asked to see the editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*. Mr. (afterwards Sir George) Grove received him at once and was both kind and encouraging, promising to look at a little poem called "Sunset off the Azores." This interview, which resulted in the immediate acceptance of the verses, three of which

<sup>1</sup> "Station Life in New Zealand." Macmillan.

are given below,<sup>1</sup> led to a life-long friendship, not only with dear Mr. Grove, whom to know was to love, but also with Mr. Alexander Macmillan, who was always kindness itself to both of us, and was responsible for putting the idea of writing into my head. At his suggestion I inflicted "Station Life in New Zealand," as well as several story-books for children, on a patient and long-suffering public.

Almost at the same time an introduction to Mr. Delane of the *Times* led to Mr. Napier Broome's

- <sup>1</sup> " Now under heaven all winds abated,  
 The sea a settling and foamless floor,  
 A sunset city is open-gated,  
 Unfastened flashes a golden door.  
 Cloud-walls asunder burst and brighten  
 Like melted metal in furnace blaze ;  
 The lava rivers run through and lighten,  
 The glory gathers before my gaze.
- Eastward an isle, half sunken, sleeping,  
 Crowns the sea with a bluer crest ;  
 Vine-clad Terceira !—but I am keeping  
 A tryst to-night with the wondrous west.  
 What there is wanting of purple islands,  
 Lo ! golden archipelagoes,  
 Coasts silver shining, and inner highlands,  
 Long ranges rosy with sunny snows.
- All glowing golds, all scarlets burning,  
 All palest, tenderest, vanishing hues,  
 All clouded colour and tinges turning,  
 Enrich, divide, the double blues ;  
 O'erleaning cliffs and crags gigantic  
 And in the heart of light one shore  
 Such as, alas ! no sea Atlantic  
 To bless the voyager ever bore."



being taken on the staff of that paper as special correspondent and reviewer, in fact, a sort of general utility man. How well I remember the anxiety and care with which my husband wrote his first review, and the pride and joy with which he showed me a charming little note from Mr. Delane, in which, referring to a hope on Mr. Broome's part of getting a clerkship in the House of Commons, he said : " Do not take any definite post at present, for you have an estate in your inkstand." And indeed so it proved, for work flowed in only too fast. As *Times* Special Correspondent he had many interesting experiences, amongst them being a visit to Petersburg to describe the late Duke of Edinburgh's marriage.

Perhaps the episode which stands out most clearly before me is a certain *tour-de-force*, as Mr. Delane himself called it, springing out of the Commune riots at the close of the siege of Paris. We had been paying a visit in Staffordshire in the early autumn of that tragic year, and reached home one Saturday evening just in time for dinner, and to find the well-known *Times* messenger seated in the hall with three or four large blue bags around him. He handed my husband a note from Mr. Delane, explaining that these bags contained a heap of miscellaneous printed matter taken from the "Cabinet Noir" at the sack of the Tuilleries, and requiring a series of articles to be made out of them.

Well, it was already late, and the papers had to be sorted, translated, and the first article written by Monday morning. So we set to work directly after dinner. It took all that night merely to sort the papers and reduce them to an orderly sequence. Much of the material before us had to be rejected as being either uninteresting or of a private and personal nature below the dignity of the *Times* to notice. The whole of the next day—with only pauses for our meals and hasty toilets—was devoted to arranging the papers into separate parts for three consecutive articles of three columns each which Mr. Delane had asked for. Then came the work of translation, which I undertook, supplying my husband with hastily scribbled sheets from which he wrote his article. The printer's boy appeared about midnight and dozed in the hall, occasionally tapping at the door for the large envelope full of MSS. which he sent off by cab. All Monday and Monday night as well as all Tuesday did the work go on. It was too interesting and exciting to think of sleep, and it was something like two o'clock on Tuesday night, or rather Wednesday morning, when, the third and last article being finished, my husband took it himself down to Printing House Square for the sake of the drive, and I crawled up to bed! It was literally crawling, for I remember I sat down on the stairs and had

a good cry, which I found most refreshing and comforting.

I too was asked to write many of the *Times* reviews of novels, and as I was invited the next year to be the first Lady Superintendent of the National School of Cookery, and I became also the Editor of a Magazine, we both had plenty of agreeable and congenial work, as well as the satisfaction of earning between us a comfortable income.

This busy but very pleasant London life went smoothly on until 1875, when the gipsy took us once more in hand I suppose, for, quite unexpectedly, my husband received an offer from the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, the late Lord Carnarvon, to go out with Sir Garnet Wolseley<sup>1</sup> to Natal as his Colonial Secretary. It required a good deal of courage to again suddenly and violently alter our mode of life, especially as only a few hours could be allowed for decision, but both Mr. Delane and the late Duke of Somerset<sup>2</sup> strongly advised my husband to accept the offer. The Duke had been the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Unseaworthy Ships, of which my husband was the Secretary, and ever since they had been thus brought into contact the Duke had honoured the clever young *Times* writer with a

<sup>1</sup> Now F. M. Viscount Wolseley.

<sup>2</sup> 12th Duke of Somerset.

steady and delightful friendship, and had always shown the keenest interest in his career.

So once more our pretty and pleasant home in Thurloe Square was broken up, and my husband started before the week was out for Natal, with Sir Garnet Wolseley and his brilliant staff. I could not break off the threads of my own work so rapidly as all that, and I did not go out to Natal until six months later. My stay there only lasted a little over a year, and I brought my two small boys back again early in 1877, settled them in England, and then joined my husband in Mauritius, where he was Lieutenant-Governor, in 1880. My own happiness as well as usefulness there was sadly marred by ill-health, which finally drove me home in 1881, and I had to remain in England until Mr. Napier Broome was appointed Governor of Western Australia in 1882. By that time I had recovered sufficiently to go round by Mauritius in one of the fine boats of the Messageries Maritimes, which then ran between Marseilles and Australia, and pick him up and go on to South Australia, from whence we had to retrace our steps across the Great Australian Bight to King George Sound. That was in the first days of June 1883. The next year he was made a K.C.M.G., and came to England in 1885, when he gave a lecture at the Royal Colonial Institute on "Western Australia," at which H.R.H. the Prince of Wales

graciously took, for the first time in the history of the Institute, the chair. It is impossible to estimate the good effect that lecture had in attracting attention to the Cinderella of the Australian colonies, or the deep gratification of the colonists themselves at His Royal Highness' kindly interest. It was quite the first step on Western Australia's road to progress and prosperity, and I do not believe that at least this generation will ever cease to be grateful to their Sovereign for helping them by his presence and patronage when they were indeed "poor and of no account."

In 1890 we left Western Australia amid heart-breaking farewells, in order to enable the Governor to see the Bill for giving Responsible Government to the Colony (which had been thrown out the Session before) through the House of Commons. That proved a most interesting and exciting summer, necessitating Sir Frederick's constant attendance before the Select Committee. But his efforts, aided by those of two other delegates,<sup>1</sup> were successful, and the Bill was triumphantly carried through to the great advantage of the Colony.

I have often thought since, that those seven years were perhaps the happiest part of my very happy life. The climate, except when a hot wind was blowing in summer, was delightful, the Govern-

<sup>1</sup> The late Sir Thomas Cockburn Campbell, Bart., and the Hon. H. Parker, K.C.

ment House, an excellent and comfortable one, stood in beautiful gardens, and the life was simple and primitive, for no one was rich in those days, and the society was small and friendly. Sir Frederick worked hard for the development of the vast Colony, which held a million square but sandy miles within its borders, finding his task congenial as well as deeply interesting. I worked too in various little ways, and amongst other plans I collected all the girls in Perth on Monday afternoons and read aloud to them for a couple of hours whilst they worked. We began with Green's "Short History of the English People," and went on to Justin M'Carthy's "History of our own Times," and then Motley's "Dutch Republic," and "Thirty Years' War." It was only an experiment at first, but it succeeded splendidly, thanks to the thirst for knowledge which all these pretty and charming girls displayed. No weather ever prevented their coming, and it would have been hard to decide who enjoyed those afternoons most, the reader or her very attentive and intelligent audience.

I can answer for myself that it was a terrible wrench to leave that dear home to which we had both become so truly attached; however, the gipsy's weird utterances had to be carried out, and a fresh home was soon started in Trinidad, to which part of the "Bow of Ulysses" my hus-

band was appointed Governor in 1891. There the life was, of course, very different, and so was the climate and the surroundings. Still the interesting work went on, but there had to be a brief visit to England—often only lasting three weeks—every year. Unlike most other Governments there was no rest or change of air possible in the Colony itself, so the English visit became a necessity for health besides affording an opportunity for settling many questions of local importance.

Our time there was drawing to a close in 1896, and already a movement was on foot (as had been the case in Western Australia) to petition the Secretary of State for an extension of Sir Frederick's term of office, when, like a bolt out of the blue, came an illness full of suffering which speedily put an end to a career of great promise, and to his life three months later.

Since 1896 I have therefore ceased wandering up and down the face of the globe, and, except for short trips abroad and a long and delightful visit to America last summer, I may be said to have settled down to a less roving life; but I feel the gipsy prophecy still holds good, and that no doubt my present little home will one day change its ground.

As it is, I often wonder which is the dream—the shifting scenes of former days, so full of interest as well as of everything which could make life

dear and precious, or these monotonous years when I feel like a shipwrecked swimmer, cast up by a wave, out of reach of immediate peril it is true, but far removed from all except the commonplace of existence. Still it is much to have known the best and highest of earthly happiness; to have "loved and been beloved," and to have found faithful friends who stood fast even in the darkest days. Among these friends I would fain believe there are some unknown ones, who have perhaps read my little books in their childhood, and to whom I venture to address these lines explaining as it were my personal story, with an entreaty for forgiveness if I have made it *too* personal.



# COLONIAL MEMORIES

## I

### OLD NEW ZEALAND

It has so chanced that quite lately I have heard a good deal of this beautiful and flourishing portion of our "Britain-over-sea," and these reports have stirred the old memories of days gone by when it was almost a *terra incognita*—as indeed were many of our splendid Colonial possessions—to the home-dweller. But the home-dweller proper hardly exists in this twentieth century, and the globe-trotter has taken his place. Even the latter sobriquet was unknown in my day, and I was regarded as quite going into exile when, some eight-and-thirty years ago, I sailed with my husband for his sheep-station on the Canterbury Plains. As far as I was concerned, the life there afforded the sharpest of all sharp contrasts, but it was none the less happy and delightful for that.

The direct line of passenger-ships only took us as far as Melbourne, and then came a dismal ten or

twelve days in a wretched little steamer, struggling along a stormy coast before the flourishing Port Lyttelton of the present day (a shabby village in 1865) was reached. Yet the great tunnel through the Port Hills was well on its way even then, and the railway to connect the port and the young town of Christchurch was confidently talked of. Even in those early days, the new-comer was struck by the familiar air of everything; and, so far as my own experience goes, New Zealand is certainly the most English colony I have seen. It never seems to have attracted the heterogeneous races of which the population of other colonies is so largely composed. For example, in Mauritius the Chinese and Arab element is almost as numerous as the French and English. In Trinidad there are large colonies of Spanish and German settlers, without counting in both these islands the enormous Indian population which we have brought there to cultivate the sugar-cane; and in all the principal towns of Australia the "foreigner" thrives and flourishes. But New Zealand has always been beautifully and distinctly English, and the grand Imperial idea has there fallen on congenial soil and taken deep root.

Even in the days I speak of, Christchurch, though an infant town, looked pretty on account of its picturesque situation on the banks of the Avon. The surrounding country was a sort of rolling

prairie, ideally suitable for sheep, with the magnificent Southern Alps for a background. And what a climate, and what a sky, and what an air ! The only fault I had to find with the atmospheric conditions was the hot wind. But hot winds were new to me in those days, and I rebelled against them accordingly. Now I begin to think hot winds blow everywhere out of England. In South Africa, in Mauritius, in all parts of Australia, one suffers from them, to say nothing of India, where they are on the largest possible scale.

The first six months of my New Zealand life was spent in Christchurch, waiting for the little wooden house to be cut out and sent up country to our sheep-station in the Malvern Hills. How absurdly primitive it all was, and yet how one delighted in it ! I well remember the "happy thought"—when the question arose of the size of drawing and dining-rooms—of spreading our carpets out on the grass and planning the house round them. And the joy of settling in, when the various portions of the little dwelling had been conveyed some seventy-five miles inland to our happy valley and fitted together. The doors and window-frames had all come from America ready-made, but the rest of the house was cut out of the kauri pine from the forests in the North Island.

The first thing I had to learn was that New Zealand meant really *three* islands—two big ones

and a little one. Everybody knows about the North and the Middle Islands, which are the big ones, but the little Stewart Island often confused me by sometimes being called the South Island, which it really is. A number of groups of small islets have been added to the colony since then, such as the Cook and Kermadec Islands, but I do not fancy they are inhabited. The colony was really not a quarter of a century old when I knew it, as it had been a dependency of New South Wales up to 1842, and it owes its separation and rapid development to the New Zealand Company, which started with a Royal charter. The Canterbury Association sent out four ships which took four months to reach Port Cooper in the Middle Island (now the flourishing seaport of Lyttelton), only sixteen years before I landed there.

The cathedral had not risen above its foundations in 1865, but I was struck with the well-paved streets, good "side-walks," gas-lamps, drinking-fountains, and even red pillar-boxes exactly like the one round the corner to-day. And it seemed all the more marvellous to me, who had just gone through the lengthy and costly experience of dragging my own little possessions across those stormy seas round the Cape of Good Hope, to think of all these aids to civilisation having come by the same route. Now I am assured you can get anything and everything you might possibly

want, on the spot, but in those days one eagerly watched a *déménagement* as a good opportunity for furnishing.

We had brought all our goods and chattels out with us, and the wooden house was soon turned into a very pretty comfortable little homestead. The great trouble was getting the garden started. The soil was magnificent, and everything in that Malvern Valley grew splendidly if the north-west winds would only allow it. Hedges of cytissus were always planted a month or so before sowing the dwarf green peas, in order that they might have some shelter, and this plan answered very well. I could not, however, start a hedge of cytissus all round my little lawn, and the consequence was that the blades of grass on that spot could easily be counted, and that I discovered a luxuriant patch of "English grass" about a mile down the flat, where a little dip in the ground had made a shelter for the flying seed. And the melancholy part of the story was that English grass-seed cost a guinea a pound! I was quite able to appreciate, three years later, the ecstasy of delight of a little New Zealand girl, who, beholding the Isle of Wight for the first time, exclaimed to me: "How rich they must be! Why, it's all laid down in English grass!"

Other flower-seeds, of course, shared the same fate, and it was indeed gardening under difficulties. But in the vegetable-garden consolation could be

found in the potatoes, strawberries, and green peas, which were huge in size and abundant in quantity.

Indoors all soon looked bright and cheery ; and besides the books we brought out, I started a magazine and book club in connection with a London library, which answered very well, and gave great delight to our neighbours, chiefly shepherds. These men were often of Scotch or north of England birth, and of a very good type. Their lives, however, were necessarily monotonous and lonely, and they were very glad of books. We had a short Church service every Sunday afternoon, to which they gladly came, and then they took new books back with them.

The only grudge I ever had against these men was that they all tried to provide themselves with wives among my maids, and by so doing greatly added to my difficulties with these damsels. Far from accepting Strephon's honourable proposals, Chloe would make these offers—which apparently bored her—an excuse for giving up her place and returning to the gay metropolis.

I honestly think those maids (I had but two of them at a time) were the chief, if not the only, real worry of my happy New Zealand life. Nothing would ever induce them to remain more than four months at the station. In spite of the suitors, they found it "lonely," and away they went. Changing

was such a troublesome business and always meant a week without any servants at all, for the dray—their sole means of conveyance—took two days on the road each way, and then there were always stores to buy and bring back, and the driver declared his horses needed a couple of days' rest in town. Some of the various reasons the maids gave for leaving were truly absurd. Once I came into the kitchen on a bright winter's morning to find them seated on a sort of sofa (made of chintz-covered boxes), clasped in each other's arms, and weeping bitterly. With difficulty I got out of them that their sole grievance was the sound of the bleating of the sheep, a "mob" of which were feeding on the nearest hillside. It was "lonesome like," and they must return to town immediately.

These girls, as well as their predecessors and successors, were a continual mystery to me, and I never could understand why they became servants at all. Not one of them ever had the faintest idea of what duties she had to perform or how to perform them. A cook had never, apparently, been in a kitchen before, nor had the housemaid ever seen, or at least handled, a broom or a duster. I was only an ignorant beginner in those days, and yet found myself obliged to teach the most elementary duties. They were nearly all factory-girls; and when I asked "Who did these things for you at home?" always answered "Mother." They had

never held a needle until I taught them how to do so ; and as for mending or darning, that was regarded as sheer waste of time. The first thing they had to learn was to bake bread, and as, unfortunately, the best teacher was our head shepherd — a good-looking, well-to-do young man — the “courting” began very soon, though it never seemed successful, and poor Ridge’s heart must have been torn to pieces during those three years of obdurate pupils.

I must, however, say here that, ignorant to an incredible degree as my various “helps” were, I found them perfectly honest and perfectly respectable. I never had the slightest fault to find on either of these counts. Sobriety went without saying, for it was compulsory, as the nearest public-house was a dozen miles away across trackless hills.

It was a real tragic time, for me at least, that constantly recurring week between the departure and arrival of my maids ; but I am inclined to think, on mature reflection, that my worst troubles arose from the volunteers who insisted on helping me. These kindly A.D.C.’s,—owners or pupils on neighbouring stations,—all professed to be quite familiar with domestic matters. But I found a sad falling-off when it came to putting their theories into practice in my kitchen. It generally turned out that they had made a hasty study of various para-



graphs in that useful work "Inquire Within, &c.," and then started forth to carry out the directions they had mastered. For instance, one stalwart neighbour presented a smiling face at our hall-door one morning and said :—

"I've come to wash up."

"That is very kind of you," I replied ; "but are you sure you know how ?"

"Oh yes—just try me, and you'll see. Very hot water, you know : boiling, in fact."

Well, there was no difficulty about the hot water, which was poured into a tub in which a good many of my pretty china plates and dishes were standing. The next moment I heard a yell and a crash—and I am very much afraid "a big, big D——"—and my "help" was jumping about the kitchen wringing his hands and shouting for cotton-wool and salad-oil and what not. It seemed a mere detail after this calamity to discover that half-a-dozen plates were broken and as many more cracked. "The beastly thing was so hot" being the excuse.

The first time the maids left I thought I would, so to speak, victual the garrison beforehand, and I had quantities of bread baked and butter churned and meat-pies made and joints roasted ; but at the end of a couple of days the larder was nearly empty, partly on account of the gigantic appetites we all had, and partly because of the addition

which our way generally led us. No English horse would have attempted the break-neck places our nags took us safely over. Up and down slippery steep stairs, where all four feet had to be collected carefully on each step, before an attempt to reach the next could be made; across swamps where there was no foothold except on an occasional tussock; over creeks with crumbling banks. At first I really could not believe that I was expected to follow over such places, but I was only adjured to "sit tight and leave it all to my horse," and certainly I survived to tell the tale! The only fall I had during all those three years of real rough-riding was cantering over a perfectly smooth plain, when a little bag strapped to my saddle slipped down and struck my very spirited mare beneath her body. She bucked frantically, and I flew into space, alighting on the point of my shoulder, which I broke. On that occasion I was the victim of a good deal of amateur surgery, but it all came right eventually, though I could not use my arm for a long time.

But to return to our amusements. Boar-hunting was perhaps the most exciting; though I was not allowed to call that an amusement, for it was absolutely necessary to keep down the wild pigs, which we owe to Captain Cook. A sow will follow very young lambs until they drop, separating them from their mothers and giving them no rest. When

the poor little things fall exhausted the sow then devours them, but it is almost impossible to track and shoot these same sows, for they hide themselves and their litters in the most marvellous way. The shepherds occasionally come across them, and then have a great orgy of sucking-pig. But the big boar whose shoulder-scales are like plated armour and quite bullet-proof, and whose tusks are as sharp as razors, gives really very good sport, and must be warily stalked. These expeditions had always to be undertaken on foot, and I insisted on going because I had heard gruesome stories of accidents to sportsmen, who had perished of cold and hunger on desolate hillsides when out after boars. So I always begged to be taken out stalking, and as I carried a basket with sandwiches and cake and a bottle of cold tea, my company was graciously accepted.

These expeditions always took place in the winter, for the affairs of the sheep seemed to occupy most of the summer, and besides it would have been too hot for climbing steep hillsides and exploring long winding gullies in anything but cold May and June weather. The boars gave excellent sport, and I well remember, after a long day's stalk up the gorge of the Selwyn River, our pride and triumph when F., who had taken a careful aim at what looked exactly like one of the grey boulders strewn about on the opposite hillside,

fired his rifle, and a huge boar leapt into the air, only to fall dead and come crashing down the steep slope.

Then there were some glorious days after wild cattle, but that was a long way off in the great Kowai Bush, and we had to camp out for nearly a week. It was difficult work getting through the forest, as, although there was a sort of track, it was often impassable by reason of fallen trees. Of course we were on foot; but it greatly adds to one's work to have constantly to climb or scramble over a barrier of branches. All the gentlemen carried compasses as the only means of steering through the curious green gloom. Though it was the height of summer, we never saw a ray of sunshine, and it was always delightfully cool. Every now and then we came to a clearing, and so could see where we were. One of these openings showed us the great Waimakariri River swirling beneath its high wooded banks, and it was, just there, literally covered with wild duck—grey, blue, and "Paradise"—all excellent eating, but I am thankful to say that the sportsmen forbore to shoot, as it would have been impossible to retrieve the birds. Some fine young bullocks fell every day to their rifles; but although I heard the shots and the ensuing shouts of joy, the thickness of the "bush" always prevented (happily!) my seeing the victims.

The undergrowth of that "bush"—*Anglice*, forest—was the most beautiful thing imaginable, and the familiar stag's-head and hart's-tongue grew side by side with exquisite forms quite unknown to me. Besides the profusion of ferns, there was a wealth of delicate fairy-like foliage, but never a flower to be seen on account of the want of sun.

In summer we sometimes went down to the nearest creek, about a mile away, for eel-fishing, but I did not care much for that form of sport. It meant sitting in star-light and solitude for many hours, and one got drenched with dew into the bargain. The preparations were the most amusing part, especially the making of balls of worsted-ends with lumps of mutton tied craftily in the middle; the idea being that when the eel snapped at the meat his teeth ought to stick in the worsted, and so he would become an easy prey to the angler. This came off according to the programme, and even I caught some; but they were far too heavy to lift out of the water, as there was no "playing" an eel, and the dead weight had to be raised by the flax-stick which was my only fishing-rod. However, quite enough of the horrid slimy things were secured to make succulent pies for those who liked them.

We once invented an amusement for ourselves by going up a mountain on our station three thousand feet high, and sleeping there in order

to see the sunrise next morning. I ought, perhaps, to explain that these Malvern Hills among which our sheep-station lay are really the lowest spurs of the great Southern Alps, so that even on our run the hills attained quite a respectable height. I had heard from those who had gone up this hill—quite near our little house—how wide and beautiful was the outlook from its summit, so I never rested until the expedition was arranged. Of course, it was only possible in the height of summer, and we chose an ideally beautiful afternoon for our start directly after an early dinner. It was possible to ride a good way up the hill, and then we dismounted (there were five of us), and took the saddles and bridles off the horses, tied them to flax-bushes within easy reach of good feed, and commenced the climb of the last and steepest bit of the ascent.

It was rather amusing to find, as soon as it came to carrying them up ourselves, how many things were suddenly pronounced to be quite unnecessary. Food and drink had to be carried (the drink consisting of water for tea) and a pair of red blankets for shelter, and just one little extra blanket for me. My share of the portage was only a bottle of milk strapped to my back—for it took both hands to scramble up, holding on to the long tussocks of grass—but I felt that I was laden to the extent of my carrying capacity! The four

gentlemen had really heavy loads ("swags," as they called all parcels or bundles), under which, however, they gallantly struggled up. There was no time to admire any view when at last we stood, breathless and panting, on the little plateau at the very top, for the twilight was fast fading, and there was the tent to be put up and wood to collect for the fire.

Fortunately, all those hillsides were more or less strewn with charred logs of a splendid hard red wood, called "totara," the last traces of the forest or bush with which they were once covered. The shepherds always pick up and bring down any of these logs which they come across when mustering or boundary-keeping, for they find them a great prize for their fires, burning slowly, and giving out a fine heat.

When we came to pitch the tent, there seemed such a draught through it that I gave up my own particular blanket to block up one end, and contented myself with a little jacket. But oh, how cold it was! We did not find it out just at first, for we were all too busy settling ourselves, lighting the fire, unpacking, and so forth. But after we had eaten the pies and provisions, and drunk a quantity of tea, there did not seem much to do except to turn in so as to be ready for the sunrise. Some tussocks of coarse grass had been cut to make a sort of bed for me, after the fashion of

the wild-pigs, who, the shepherds declare, "have clean sheets every night," for they never use their lair more than once, and always sleep on fresh bitten-off grass. In spite of this luxury, however, I must say I found the ground *very* hard, and the wind, against which the blankets seemed absolutely no protection, *very* cold. Also the length of that night was something marvellous; and when we looked down into the valley and saw the lights twinkling in our own little homestead, and reflected that it could not be yet ten o'clock, a sense of foolishness took possession of us. Every one looked, as seen by the firelight, cold and miserable, but happily no one was cross or reproachful. Three of the gentlemen sat round the fire smoking all night, with occasional very weak "grogs" to cheer them. F. shared the tent with me and Nettle, my little fox-terrier; but Nettle showed himself a selfish doggie that night. I wanted him to sleep curled up at my back for warmth, but he would insist on so arranging himself that I was at *his* back, which was not the same thing for me at all.

We certainly verified the proverb of its being darkest before dawn, for the stars seemed to fade quite out, and an inky blackness stole over earth and sky an hour or so before a pale streak grew luminous in the east. I fear I must confess to having by that time quite forgotten my ardent



desire to see the sunrise. All I thought of was the joy of getting home, and being warm once more; and, as soon as it was light enough to see anything, we began to strike the little tent and pack up the empty dishes and pannikins. But long before we could have thought it possible, and long before it could be seen from the deep valley below us, the sun uprose, and one felt as if one was looking at the majestic sight for the first time since the Creation. Nothing could have been more magnificent than the sudden flood of light bursting over the wide expanse. Fifty miles away, the glistening waves of the Pacific showed quite clearly; below us spread the vast Canterbury Plains, with the great Waimakariri River flowing through them like a tangle of silver ribbons. To the west rose steep, forest-covered hills, still dark and gloomy, with the eerie-looking outline of the snow-ranges rising behind. A light mist marked where the great Ellesmere Lake lay, the strange thing about which is that, although only a slight bar of sand separates it from the sea, its waters are quite fresh. All we could see of the River Rakaia were its steep banks, but beyond them again shone the gleam of the Rangitata's waters, whilst close under our feet the Selwyn ran darkly through its narrow gorge. The little green patches of cultivation—so few and far between in those days—each with its tiny cottage,

gave a little homelike touch which was delightful, as did also the strings of sheep going noisily down from their high camping-grounds to feed in the sheltered valleys or on the sunny slopes. It was certainly a most beautiful panorama, and we all agreed that it was well worth our long, cold night of waiting. Still, we got home as quickly as we could, and I remember the day proved a very quiet one. I suspect there were many surreptitious naps indulged in by us poor "Watchers of the Night."

## II

### OLD NEW ZEALAND—*Continued*

No wandering reminiscence of these distant days would be complete without a brief mention of the famous snowstorm of 1867, at which I assisted.

I must say a prefatory word or two about the climate—so far as my three years' experience went—in order to explain the full force of the disaster that fall of snow wrought. The winters were short and delicious, except for an occasional week of wet weather, which, however, was always regarded by the sheep-farmer as excellent for filling up the creeks, making the grass grow, and being everything that was natural and desirable. When it did not rain, the winter weather was simply enchanting, although one had to be prepared for its sudden caprices, for weather is weather even at the antipodes, and consequently unreliable. Sometimes we started on an ideally exquisite morning for a long ride on some station business. The air would be still and delicious, fresh and exhilarating to a degree hardly to be understood; the sun brilliant and just sufficiently warming.

All would go well for four or five hours, until, perhaps, we had crossed a low saddle in the mountains and were coming home by the gorge of a river. In ten minutes everything might have changed. A sou'-wester would have sprung up as though let out of a bag, heavy drops of rain would be succeeded by a snow-flurry, in which it was not always easy to find one's way home across swamps and over creeks, and the riders who set forth so gaily at ten of the clock that same morning would return in the fast-gathering darkness wet to the skin, or rather frozen to the bone. I have often found it difficult to get out of my habit, so stiff with frozen snow was its bodice.

No one ever dreamed of catching cold, however, from the meteorological changes and chances, an immunity which no doubt we owed to the fact that we led, whether we liked it or not, an open-air life. The little weather-boarded house, with its canvas-papered lining, did not offer much protection from a hard frost, and I have often found a heap of feathery snow on a chair near my closed bedroom window; the snow having drifted in through the ill-fitting frame.

Still these snow-showers, and even hard frosts (which usually melted by midday), did no harm to man or beast, and found us totally unprepared for the fall in August 1867. Of course there were no meteorological records kept in those days, for

they had not long been started even in England, and we had nothing to go by except the Maori traditions, which held no record of anything the least like that snowstorm. Indeed, I had seldom seen snow lie on the ground for more than an hour after the sun rose, and it never was thought of as a danger in our comparatively low hills.

I well remember that Monday morning and the strange restlessness which seemed to extend to the sheep, for they must have felt the coming trouble long before we thought of calamity. The weather during the last week of July had been quite beautiful, our regular winter weather, and we had taken advantage of it to send the dray down to Christchurch for supplies. My store-room was all but empty, and the tea-chest, flour and sugar bags, held hardly half-a-week's consumption, so the drayman was charged not to linger, but to turn round and come back directly he got his load. When speaking of supplies it must be borne in mind that tinned provisions were almost unknown in those days, and certainly never found their way to a New Zealand sheep station. F. had also taken advantage of the beautiful open weather to ride down to Christchurch about wool matters, so I expected to be quite alone with a youth who was learning sheep-farming under F.'s auspices, and my two servants.

But F. had hardly started before a cousin rode up the track and, hearing I was feeling somewhat depressed and lonely, very kindly volunteered to stay, and before the afternoon was over a neighbouring young squatter also appeared, and asked (as was quite a common thing in that hotel-less district) for shelter for the night. Nothing could have been more unexpected—except that one's station guests always were unexpected—than these two visitors, but it proved a fortunate chance for me that they appeared just then.

The weather was certainly curious, and we all noticed that the sound of the sheep's bleat never ceased. Now the odd thing at a sheep station used to be that you hardly ever saw a sheep, and still more seldom heard one, except perhaps in the early morning, when they were coming down from their high camping-grounds. And sheep always "travel" head to wind, but the sheep that afternoon kept moving in exactly the contrary direction. Still I was not in the least uneasy about the weather, except as it might affect the comfort of F.'s seventy-five mile ride to town, and I knew he would be under comfortable shelter at a friend's half-way house that night. So we gaily and lavishly partook of our supper-dinner, had an absurd game of whist, and went to bed as usual.

It was no surprise to see snow falling steadily

next morning, but it was disagreeable to find there was very little mutton in the house, and that it was quite likely the shepherd would wait for the weather to clear before starting across the hills and swamps between us and the little homestead where the woolshed stood, and from whence the business of the station was carried on.

The three gentlemen lounged about all day and smoked a good deal. They told me afterwards how bitterly they regretted not having made some preparation in the way of at least bringing in fuel, or putting extra food for the fowls, &c. But each said to the other every five minutes, "Oh, you know snow in New Zealand *never* lasts," though their experience was only a very few years old. It was short commons that second day, and I thought sadly that the dray would have only reached Christchurch that evening! We all felt depressed, and, as no one had any use for depression up that valley, the sensation was quite new to us.

It was not until we met on the third morning, however, that we at all acknowledged our fears. By this time the snow was at least four feet deep in the shallowest places, and still continued to fall steadily. It was impossible to see even where the fowl-house and pig-sties stood, on the weather side of the house. All the great logs of wood lying about waiting to be cut up were hidden, so

was the little shed full of coal. A smooth high slope, like a hillock, stretched from the outer kitchen door, which could not be opened that morning, out into the floating whiteness. All our windows were nearly blocked up and became quite so by the evening, and no door except one, which opened inwards, could be used. And we had literally no food in the house. The tea at breakfast was merely coloured hot water, and we each had a couple of picnic biscuits. For dinner there was a little rice and salt. Imagine six people to be fed every day, and an empty larder and store-room !

The day after that my maids declined to get up, declaring they preferred to "die warm"; so I took them in a sardine each, a few ratafia biscuits, and a spoonful of apricot jam. Those were our own rations for that day. We had by that time broken up every box for fuel, and only lighted a fire in the kitchen, where also a solitary candle burned.

"Be very careful of the dips," said one of my guests, "for I've read of people eating them."

"I hear the cat mewing under the house," said another; "we'll try to get hold of her."

"I wonder if those are the cows?" asked a third, pointing to three formless heaps high above the stockyard rails, but within them.

By Friday morning the maids, still in bed, were



asking tearfully, "And oh! when do you think we'll be found, mum?" Whereas my anxiety was to find something to feed them with! We shook out a heap of discarded flour-bags and got, to our joy, quite a plateful of flour, and a careful smoothing out of the lead lining of old tea-chests yielded a few leaves, so we had girdle-cakes and tea that day. I was very unhappy about the dogs: the horses were out on the run as usual, so it was no use thinking of them.

On Saturday there was literally nothing at all in the house (which was quite dark, remember), and my three starving men roped themselves together and struggled out, tunnelling through the snow, in the direction where they thought the fowl-house must lie. After a couple of hours' hard work they hit upon its roof, tore off some of the wooden shingles, and captured a few bundles of feathers, which were what my poor dear hens were reduced to. However, there was a joyful struggle back, and after some hasty preparation the fowls were put into a saucepan with a lump of snow, for there was no water to be got anywhere, and a sort of stew resulted, of which we thankfully partook. This heartened up the gentlemen to make another sally to the stockyard in search of the cows. The clever creatures had kept moving round and round as the snow fell, so as to make a sort of wider tomb for themselves, and they were alive,

though mere bundles of skin and bone. They were dragged by ropes to the stable and there fed with oaten hay. It was no question of milking the poor things, for they were quite dry.

Next day the dogs were dug out, but only one young and strong one survived. Two more were alive, but died soon after.

On Sunday it had ceased snowing and the wind showed signs of changing. I struggled a yard or two out of the house, as it was such a blessing to get into daylight again. My view was of course much circumscribed, as I could only see up and down the "flat," as the valley was called. But it all looked quite different; not a fence or familiar landmark to be seen on any side. If I could have been wafted to the top of the mountain from which we saw the sun rise the summer before, what a white world should I have beheld! And if I could have soared still higher and looked over the whole of the vast Canterbury Plains, I should have been gazing at the smooth winding-sheet of half a million of sheep, for that was found, later, to be the loss in that Province alone.

Yet, as we afterwards came to know, it was not really the fall of snow, tremendous as it had been, which cost the Province nearly all its stock. As I have said, the wind changed to the north-west—the warm quarter—on Sunday night, and it rained heavily as well as blowing half a gale. On

Monday morning the snow was off the roof and it was possible to clear some of the windows. An early excursion was also made to the styres and a very thin pig was killed, and, as a bag of Indian meal for fattening poultry had also been found in the stable loft, a sort of cake could be made. So we were no longer starving, and the maids got up!

Twenty-four hours of this warm rain and wind was what did all the mischief to the poor sheep. By Monday night every creek within sight had overflowed its banks, and was running—a dirty yellow stream—over the fast-melting snowfields. The rapid thaw and the flooded creeks made locomotion more difficult than ever, but the three gentlemen set to work at once to try to release the imprisoned sheep. There was but one dog to work with, and he was so weak he could hardly move, but the poor sheep were still weaker. Contrary to their custom they had mostly sought refuge beneath the projecting banks of the creeks, and would have been safe enough there had not the sudden thaw let the water in on them before they could struggle up, so they were nearly all drowned. It was most pathetic to discover how in some places the mothers had tried to save the lambs by standing over them in a leaning attitude so as to make a shelter. The lambing season had just begun, and on our own run, which was but

a small one, we lost three thousand lambs. Several were brought in to me to try to save, but I had no cow's milk to give them, and warm meal and water did not prove enough to keep the poor little starving creatures alive. It was heart-breaking work, and when F. returned it was to find the fences tapestried with the skins of a thousand sheep.

As soon as we could move about on horseback we rode all over the run and found that the sheep had evidently fared better when they had kept on higher ground. It was curious to see the tops of the little Ti-ti palms, some ten or twelve feet high, entirely nibbled off where the sheep had clustered round them, and, as the snow fell, mounted higher and higher until they could reach the green leaves. In those days all the flocks were pure or half-bred merino ; active, hardy little black-faced sheep, tasting like Welsh mutton, and delicious eating. On these excursions we often came upon dead wild-pigs, boars cased in hides an inch thick, which had perished through sheer stress of weather. It was wonderful to think that thin-skinned animals, with only a few months' growth of fine merino wool on their backs, could have survived.

During the long bright summer which followed, we used often to ask each other if it could be true that hills had apparently been levelled and valleys

filled up by the heaviest snowstorm ever known. But when we looked at the Ti-ti palms with their topmost leaves gnawed to the stump, we realised that the sheep must have been standing on eight or nine feet of snow to reach them. When the survivors came to be shorn, it was plainly to be seen by the sort of "nick" in the fleece, where their three weeks' imprisonment had evidently checked the growth of the wool. Many of the hardest wethers must have been without food for that time, as the pasturage was either under snow or flooded.

In looking back on that tragic time, its only bright memory is connected with tobogganing on a rough but giant scale, and I greatly wonder any of us survived that form of amusement. By the time every possible thing had been done for the surviving sheep, the snow had disappeared from all but the steep weather-side of the encircling hills, so our slides had to be arranged on very dangerous slopes.

The sledges on which these perilous journeys were made consisted of a couple of short planks nailed together, with a batten across for one's feet to rest on, and half a shears for a brake. If the gentlemen would only have made these rapid descents alone! But they insisted on my being a constant passenger. No one who has not gone through it can imagine the sensation of being

launched on a bit of board down a mountain side !  
And yet there must have been a fearful joy in it,  
because after turning round and round many times  
as one flew over the hard snow surface, and arriving  
in a heap, head foremost, in a snowdrift, one was  
quite ready to try again. Luckily another north-  
west gale set in, and when it had blown itself  
out there were too many sharp-pointed rocks stick-  
ing up out of the remaining snow to make our mad  
descents practicable.

### III

#### OLD NEW ZEALAND—*Continued*

I WONDER if "swaggers" have been improved off the face of the country districts of New Zealand? Tramps one would perhaps have called them in England, and yet they were hardly tramps so much as men of a roving disposition, who wandered about asking for work, and they really could and did work if wanted. They nearly always appeared, with their "swag" (a roll of red blankets) on their backs, about sunset, and it was etiquette for them to offer to chop wood before shelter was suggested. A good meal of tea, mutton, and bread followed as a matter of course, and a shakedown in some shed. In the early morning, if there was no employment forthcoming, the "swagger" would fetch water, chop more wood, or do anything he was asked, before he got some more food and left. They always seemed very quiet, decent men, and perfectly honest. Indeed, a missing pair of boots (afterwards found to have only been mislaid) raised a great commotion in the whole country-side until they were found, and I suspect the owner had to apologise abjectly to all the "swaggers"!

The invariable custom of the "swagger" only appearing at sunset made it all the more wonderful when I found one crouched in a corner of the verandah at dawn one bitter winter's morning. Now I was not at all in the habit of getting up at daylight in winter, but it was a glorious morning after nearly a week of wretched wet and cold weather. Some demon of restlessness must have induced me to jump up, huddle on a warm dressing-gown and start on a window-opening expedition, which led me shortly to the little hall-door. This I also opened to let in the fast-coming sunshine, and I nearly tumbled over the most forlorn object it is possible to imagine. At first I thought that a heap of wet and dirty clothes lay at my feet, but a shaggy head uprose and a feeble voice muttered, "I'm fair clemmed." Such wistful eyes, like a lost, starving dog, glanced at me, and then the head dropped back. I thought the man was dead or dying, and I flew to wake up F. and to fetch my medicine bottle of brandy. But I could not get any down his throat until F. arrived on the scene and turned the poor creature over on his back. By this time I had roused up the "cadet," and also got my maids hurriedly out of bed. My tale was so pitiful that the warm-hearted Irish cook—in the scantiest toilet—was lighting the kitchen fire by the time F. and Mr. U. brought the poor man in. Water was literally streaming



from him, and the first thing to be done was to get him out of his sodden clothes. Contributions from the two gentlemen were soon forthcoming, and after a brief retirement into my store-room, the wretched "swagger" emerged, dry indeed, but the image of exhaustion and starvation. Warm bread and milk every two hours was all we dared give him that day, and he slept and slept as if he never meant to wake again.

I forget how many days passed before he had at all recovered, and by that time my maids had cleaned and mended his clothes in a surprising manner, and he had, himself, cobbled up his boots. A hat had to be provided and a pipe, but we could not spare any blankets for the "swag." However, though he hardly spoke to any one, he told Mr. U. he felt quite able to start next day, and F. elicited from him with some difficulty—for it was against "swagger" etiquette ever to complain of the treatment of one station-holder to another—that at the very beginning of that bad weather he had found himself at sundown at a station about a dozen miles further back in the hills, and had been refused shelter. The man pointed out that he did not know the track over a difficult saddle, that very bad weather was evidently coming on, and that he had no food, but he was ruthlessly turned off and seemed soon to have lost his way. He wandered some days—he did not know how many—without food or shelter,

pelted by the merciless and continuous storm ; his pipe and blankets soon got lost in one of the numerous bog-holes, and he really did not know how he found his way to our verandah, or how long before dawn he had been lying there. I must say it was the only instance I heard of brutality to a "swagger" whilst I was in New Zealand.

Well, by the next morning I had ceased to think about the "swagger," and when I looked out of my window to enjoy the delicious crisp air and the sunshine, I saw my friend coming round the corner of the house, evidently prepared to start. He looked round, but I had slipped behind the window curtain, so he saw no one. To my deep surprise, the man dropped on his knees upon the little gravel path, took off his hat, and poured forth the most impassioned prayer for all the dwellers beneath the roof which had given him shelter. Not a soul was stirring, so he could not have been doing it for effect, and he certainly had not seen me. I felt as if I had no right to listen, for it was as though he were laying bare his soul. First, there was his deep thankfulness for his own preservation most touchingly expressed, and then he prayed for every blessing on each and all of us, and, finally, as he rose from his knees, he signed the Cross over the little roof-tree which had sheltered him in his hour of need. And we had all thought him a silent and somewhat ungracious man !

I really *cannot* believe that I often rode fifty miles to a ball, or rather two balls, danced all night for two successive nights, and rode back again the next day ! The railway was even then creeping up the plains and saved us the last twenty-five miles of the road. These same balls were almost the only form of society in those days, for dinner-parties were impossible for want of anything but the most elementary service. Certainly there were bazaars sometimes, but I do not remember riding fifty miles for any of them ! Such amusing things used to happen at these balls, which, no doubt, were very primitive, but we all enjoyed them too much to be critical.

On one occasion the Governor had come to Christchurch for some political reason, and of course there were balls to welcome him. He had brought down some Maori chieftains with him ; rumour said he was afraid to leave them behind in the North Island, where the seat of Government used to be and still is. Now I was very curious to see these chieftains, and it was somewhat of a shock to behold tall, well-built, dark-hued men faultlessly clad in correct evening-dress, but with tattooed faces. Presently one of the stewards of the ball came to me and said :—

“Te Henare wants very much to dance these Lancers ; I should be so grateful if you would dance with him.”

“Certainly,” I answered ; “but can he dance ? ”

"Oh, he will soon pick it up, and you'd have an interpreter."

Te Henare, who had been watching the result of the mission, now approached, made me a beautiful bow, offered his arm most correctly, and we took our places at the side, closely followed by the interpreter. I discovered through this gentleman that my dusky partner had never seen a ball or social gathering of any sort before, and that he had learned his bow and how to claim his partner since he entered the room. Of course, we danced in silence, and indeed I was fully occupied in admiring the extraordinary rapidity with which Te Henare mastered the intricacies of the dance. He never made a single mistake in any part which he had seen the top couples do first, and when I had to guide him he understood directly. It was a wonderful set of Lancers, and when it was over I told the interpreter that I was quite astonished to see how well Te Henare danced. This little compliment was duly repeated, and I could not imagine why the interpreter laughed at the answer. Te Henare seemed very anxious that it should be passed on to me and was most serious about it, so I insisted on being told. It seems the poor chieftain had said with a deep sigh, "Ah, if I might only dance without my clothes! No one could really dance in these horrid things!"

Te Henare apologised through the interpreter for his tattooed face. His cheeks were decorated

with spiral dark-blue curves, and his forehead bore an excellent copy of a sea-shell. The poor man was deeply ashamed of his tattoo, and said he would give anything to get rid of the disfiguring marks, and so would the other chieftains, adding pathetically, "Until we came here we were proud of them."

I must confess I got rather tired of poor Te Henare, and indeed of all the chieftains, for they insisted on coming to call on me next day for the purpose of letting me hear some Maori music. I cannot truthfully say I enjoyed it. Every song seemed to have at least fifty verses as well as a refrain. Fortunately, they did not sing loudly, but there was no tune beyond a bar or two, and the monotony was maddening. The interpreter and I tried in vain to stop them, and at last I went away, leaving them still singing, quite happily, what I was informed was "a love-song." It seemed more in the nature of a lullaby.

I fear it is an unusual confession for a staid elderly woman to make, but I certainly enjoyed those unconventional—what might almost be called rough—days more than the long years of official routine and luxury which followed them. But then one looks back on those days through the softening haze of time and distance, of youth and health ; and one realises that after all "the greatest of these is Love."

#### IV

### A MODERN NEW ZEALAND

THE passage of over a quarter of a century has of course made a great change all over the world in the matter of education, but probably nowhere would that change be more apparent than in New Zealand. Even in less than ten years after I had left the Colony, two thousand schools had been started under a new law, with a roll of two hundred thousand scholars. What must they number now ? There are Schools for natives and Schools for the deaf and dumb and for the blind, Schools of Mines and Schools of Science, Technical Schools, and a fine Agricultural College in Canterbury.

But in my day very few of the working men I came across, as our shepherds, shearers, and so forth, could read at all. One can hardly realise it, but so it was, and one of the first things I did was to start a sort of night school for these stalwart Empire-builders, in which, alas ! I was the only teacher. The population was so thin and so scattered in those distant days that these men's lives were necessarily very lonely, and those who

could read at all eagerly joined a little lending library, or rather a Book and Magazine Club, which I set going. At first I had only thought of providing literature for our neighbours—any one within fifty miles was a neighbour—but the shepherds begged to join, and of course I was delighted to enrol them.

Looking back on those days, I fear the comic side of that educational attempt chiefly asserts itself. My pupils—only four or five at a time—were so big and so desperately shy. One gigantic Yorkshireman would only read, or rather attempt to read, with his broad back turned to me. Others almost wept over their difficulties. It really involved far more trouble on their part than on mine, for they had often some distance to ride, and over such trackless hills and swamps. It was found almost impracticable to have any set evening for the lessons, as sometimes weather, and sometimes their duties interfered; so at last it was settled that they should come any evening they could spare, and I would be ready for them by eight o'clock (so primitive was our dinner-hour!) in the little dining-room. Certainly the seeds of knowledge are *very* difficult to plant in later life, for intelligent as these men evidently were, and most eager to learn to read and write, they made but little progress under my tuition. Perhaps I was a bad teacher, for I had only the experience

of my own little boys' very first lessons to guide me.

Some of the incidental difficulties were very absurd. Two men lived in a hut up a lonely and distant river-gorge, who were among my earliest pupils, and they also came regularly on Sunday to the little afternoon service. But they never came together, and their brand-new suit of shepherd's plaid had always a strange effect. First they tried my gravity by invariably stepping up to me with their prayer-books to find their places for them, and saying loudly each time, "Thank you kindly, Mum." I dared not say a word for fear of frightening them away. But one day I ventured to ask why they could not come together, either to the lessons or the service, and was informed that the clothes were the difficulty.

"You see, it's this way, Mum. We've only got one suit, and we got it a between-size on purpose. Joe, he's too tall, and I'm too short, so I turns it up, and Joe he wears leggin's and such like, and so we makes it do till after shearin'."

But I do not want to laugh when I think of the last time I met my bearded pupils. My own face was set towards England then, and I had to say good-bye to the happy valley and to my scholars. They were made shyer than ever by my shaking hands with them, and only one said a farewell word. "To England, home and beauty, of course,



Mum, you'd be glad to go, but it's rough on us." This cryptic utterance seemed quite to express his and his "mate's" meaning, though it still remains dark to me.

The Canterbury Plains are now covered with fields of wheat and all kinds of agricultural produce. The rare "English grass" of my day is almost universal. Except in the very back-country stations, the little hardy merino sheep has given way to the more substantial Southdown, whose frozen carcase comes back to us in the shape of excellent mutton. Comfortable homesteads are within hailing distance of each other. Railways, telegraphs, telephones, and all the latest scientific annihilators of time and space are thickly planted everywhere. I used to look down the valley on to certain white cliffs which seemed to bound my view in that direction, and, speaking of it the other day, some one said, "Oh, the terminus of the nearest railway to your old 'run' stands there now." I cannot realise that the whistle of an engine has taken the place of the shrill scream of a huge hawk—more like an eagle than a hawk—which haunted that lonely spot.

But perhaps the greatest difference of all would be found in the sport.

In my day there was absolutely nothing except the wild boars, and the difficulties of introducing game seemed at first insurmountable. Mr. Frank

Buckland sent out quantities of salmon ova packed in ice, of which hardly a single specimen survived the long voyage. Then people told me that the New Zealand rivers were impossible to stock, owing to a bad habit they had of constantly changing their beds without warning. It is true that I saw that happen at those very white cliffs I have just spoken of, where, after an unusually violent hot north-west gale which melted the snows in the mountains, the river running beneath those cliffs changed its course entirely during one night, cutting another wide and deep channel for itself over very good grazing ground, and leaving the owner of that particular spot with a vast extent of shingle-covered river-bed in exchange, on which, as he pathetically said, "a grasshopper could not find enough green meat."

One can easily understand that respectable stay-at-home English fish would not be able to shift their quarters at such short notice, but yet I am now assured that a good basket of trout can be landed from almost any New Zealand stream. They must have become very "mobile"! I wonder if any of these same fish are the descendants of what I always regarded as *my* trout!

This was the way of it. Not long before we left New Zealand, one of our squatter neighbours, who was anxious to stock a fine stream running through his property, offered to give a home and

a chance to some of the newly-imported trout ova. I happened to meet him on one of my rare visits to Christchurch, and inquired as to the progress of his trout plans. I suppose that put the idea into his head, for he first asked when we were returning to our station, and then earnestly entreated to be allowed to drive me back in a sort of buggy or gig he possessed. I greatly preferred riding, and told him so, but he seemed most anxious for my company, and finally said he would speak to F. about it. I felt quite willing to abide by *his* decision, which I flattered myself would be that I must certainly ride back with him. But to my dismay F. said, "I think you had better drive with ——" So there was no help for it, and at the appointed early hour Mr. — drove up, I was packed into the buggy, and then the whole villainous scheme revealed itself! I was wanted to carry a small pail full of trout ova, carefully, so that it should not be jolted or spill. My whole attention and my every thought were to be devoted to that sole object. I must not move or talk; I must think of nothing but that pail. Mr. — assured me later that his mind would be entirely fixed on avoiding every stone or even inequality on the road, so that the precious freight might not be jeopardised. And I had seventy-five miles before me! If we came to a really rough bit of road, I had to hold that pail out, on the

principle of a swinging cot at sea. Fortunately, there was a halt in the middle of the day, but only for the benefit of the ova ; however, my aching arms got just a little rest. To make my sense of hardship more acute, F. rode near us most of the way, and constantly added his entreaties to me to "be very careful." Later, I arrived at feeling a certain sense of pride in having conveyed those ova so carefully that they all survived the journey, but at the time I well remember my suppressed indignation and burning sense of injury at having been entrapped as a trout-carrier. But that only lasted so long as did the fatigue of my cramped position.

There has always been very good sea-fishing almost everywhere on the coast, but we lived too far off to enjoy it. When, however, we went to Christchurch it was always a great treat to have at every meal the whitebait the Maoris sold in pretty little baskets of woven flax-leaves.

I see in the latest accounts that our own familiar "Selwyn" is quite a favourite trout stream, but in the more distant big lakes, where the fish attain quite a large size, the water is so clear that a rod is useless, and netting is the only chance.

Some means must have been found of keeping down the "weeka," tamest and most impudent of apteryx. Very like a stout hen pheasant itself, only without the tail feathers, it used to be the

sworn foe of pheasants in my day. It ate their eggs or killed the young birds. Many and doleful were the tales told of the wholesale massacre of the pioneer pheasant broods by the weekas, who seemed numerous as the sands of the sea-shore. Dogs hunted them, men shot them, but in both cases they were as elusive as the Boers, gliding from tussock to tussock, and when forced into the open, running almost faster than the eye could follow. To all my "bush" picnics the weekas invited themselves and cleared up every crumb. It would have needed a pack of terriers to keep them off, and although "Nettle" did his best he made no impression on the marauders. They were not good to eat, but the shepherds extracted an oil from the fat, which they declared made boots and leggings waterproof. Still, weekas had it very much their own way at that date. I see that hares and also Californian quail and plover flourish nowadays, and I know the wild-duck were always plentiful and delicious eating.

There was a talk of importing deer even thirty-five years ago, but the idea did not find favour in the eyes of the run-holders. The fences were only three or four wires high, and would of course be no protection to the sheep, whose feed would be at the mercy of the new-comer. It was known that two hinds and a stag had been turned out in some well-grassed and forested low ranges in the

North Island as early as 1862, but one did not hear anything of them as either a danger or a pleasure. They were the only survivors of a batch sent from Windsor Forest by the late Prince Consort. The conditions must have been ideally favourable, for they have now spread all over the place, and afford excellent sport. Red deer seem to do well in our island (the Middle), though I do not fancy they have come at all near the part I knew. A few moose have been turned out on the West Coast of the same Island, and there is even a talk of importing wapiti and cariboo. But any one who wishes to know all about New Zealand—fur, fin, and feathers—cannot do better than study, as I have done with the greatest pleasure and profit, a delightful booklet by Mr. R. A. Loughman, of the Lands and Survey Department in Wellington, which no doubt can be procured at the Agent General for New Zealand's Office. It makes one wish to set off directly for that favoured though distant shore, and Mr. Loughman asserts that numbers of sportsmen arrive there every year.

I heard a great deal of modern New Zealand when the Imperial Representative Corps came back from their wonderful tour round Australia and New Zealand three years ago. It was most interesting and delightful to listen to the accounts of the progress everywhere; but as I had been so very much longer away from New Zealand, the mar-

vellous changes there took more hold of my imagination, and I was delighted to be told by all that it was still the most English place they visited.

There was much to occupy the public mind at home just then, and I have often felt that we rather missed the value and significance of that tour, especially as it was somewhat overshadowed and crowded out by the rapture and magnificence of the welcome extended to their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York almost directly afterwards.

We were still in the midst of the war in South Africa, and then, just after the Imperial Contingent left Sydney, to which it first went to take part in the ceremonies marking the Inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth, the Empire had to mourn the loss of its beloved Queen, and nowhere was the grief more personal and profound than on those distant shores. As the Commandant<sup>1</sup> told me, although the sad news spoiled in a way the gaiety and *éclat* of the greeting provided for the troops, still it was far more impressive to see the genuine grief and regret which the width of the world could not weaken. Memorial services everywhere took the place of balls, and the "Soldiers of the Queen" shared, with the splendid Colonial forces who were just then springing to arms at the Empire's call, in honouring her dear memory.

<sup>1</sup> Lieut.-Colonel Crole-Wyndham, C.B., 21st Lancers.

But by the time Invercargill, the most southern point of New Zealand, had been reached, the first dark days of sorrow had passed, and the people could better give free scope to their hospitable instincts, and they greeted the Contingent with the heartiest welcome. The last time British troops had touched New Zealand shores it was to fight the Maoris, who now stood first and foremost in the cheering crowd, and delivered addresses of welcome with the best.

The straight run down from the extreme south of Middle Island brought them in due time, through those great Canterbury Plains where harvesting was in full swing, down to Christchurch, and so on to Lyttelton. But there was always time, apparently, for delightful little picturesque episodes, such as stopping the train to let the detachment of Seaforth Highlanders march, with pipes playing, to visit one of the most prominent Scotch settlers, a man who had given his life's work to the beautiful new land. Fancy what a dramatic moment! To hear the war-pipes skirl, and the old tunes played, all in one's own honour and in recognition of splendid service!

Then the thousand troops were taken on by sea to Wellington and shown everything in the length and breadth of all the fair land; up to the wonderful hot springs at Rotarua, down to the deer-stocked islands off Auckland. Everywhere, not



only did they receive a rapturous welcome from the cheering crowds, but there were many historic and picturesque moments in which the Maoris formed the central figures. I should like to have seen the old Maori chieftain, after the "haka" or native dance, fling his tasselled spear at the Commandant's feet, saying, "For four hundred years this taiaha has been handed down from father to son, from son to grandson. But you and I alike are sons of our King, who rules in the place of the Queen we have lost. Take it, and let it descend to your children's children."

Thrilling also must have been the sight of the veterans of former wars, now peaceful citizens, ending their days in comfort in these distant lands, yet, like the war-horse of Bible story, pricking up their ears and joining their new comrades. At all the reviews there the veteran sailors and soldiers were, marshalled in the old form and given prominent places; they themselves, with their medal-covered breasts, being objects of honour to the gorgeous visitors. And quite as thrilling must have been the ranks of cadets who lined the streets here and there. My own heart has often gone out to these chubby boy-soldiers when I have seen them—first at Adelaide in 1883, later in Western Australia, where the youthful corps bore my name, and was known as my "Own"—so it was with a peculiar interest that I read part of a speech of the

Commandant's when he was leaving Brisbane, but it applies equally well to the cadet corps of all the large New Zealand towns.

"What pleased me most in the march through your streets to-day, more than even the enthusiastic greetings of the Queenslanders, was nearly a mile of boys lining the road by the railway station. Hundreds of sturdy youngsters, every one of them devouring our men with his eyes and doing his best to look like a soldier himself. I thought as I looked at their bright, keen young faces, '*there* are our future Australian contingents.' "

At Auckland there was one newly-raised detachment which had not yet got its uniform, but turned out in white shirts with black arm-bands and Panama hats. These sinewy, workmanlike "bushmen" had ridden in from the country district on their own horses—as workmanlike as themselves—not to take part in the big parade which every one was talking about, and which would be remembered for years, but in order to lend the Contingent their horses. Such stories—stories which I know to be true—show me that after all the lapse of years New Zealand still remains in heart the Old New Zealand of my day.

But, speaking of medals, I was much amused at hearing that the youthful volunteers turned out sometimes quite covered with medals, extending as far back as the first Cape war and going on to the

Crimea and the Mutiny. On its being remarked that they looked very young to have taken part in such distant campaigns, they admitted that the medals had belonged to their grandfathers and fathers, but that they conceived themselves entitled—as did many others who were not even volunteers—to wear them, and could see nothing at all laughable in doing so. It seemed to me a very wise concession on the part of the Colonial authorities to permit this, as a recognition of the natural pride of the sons of such men in their ancestors having fought for the Empire in bygone days, for they evidently regarded the medals as a link binding them to the dear old Mother-land. However, the present generation will proudly wear medals of their own winning, even if they do so side by side with those gained by their forefathers. Yes, those thousand picked men of that fine Imperial Contingent will have been so many Peace missionaries bringing back news of the loyalty as well as of the wealth and beauty of that fair England beyond the sea.

Not less emphatically will these tidings be endorsed by the welcome extended to their King's son and his gracious young wife when they too landed on those smiling shores a few months later. The message their Royal Highnesses brought was to the same effect, and received in the same spirit of love and gratitude. At all events it will not be

our fault if our kinsmen beyond the sea, especially in the Islands of New Zealand, do not understand how we valued the splendid help they gave the Empire in its hour of need, and how grateful we are for it. I was reading a little while ago some of the evidence taken before the War Commission last year, and saw that one of the Generals was asked if he had, at any time, any of the many New Zealand Contingents under his command. "I am sorry to say I had not," was the reply, and I felt just as personally proud of the answer as though I were a New Zealander myself, and all for the sake of those dear distant days and the good friends who helped to make them so happy.

## V

### NATAL MEMORIES

As I sit, sad and alone in my empty home, dreading the cries of the newspaper-boys in the streets, my thoughts often fly back to the "Fair Natal" I knew long ago. More than twenty-eight years have passed since I last saw it. Then, as now, it was early summer-time. The wide, well-watered stretches of veldt were brilliantly green and covered with blossom, chiefly lilies and cinerarias; the spruits were running like Scotch burns, and the dreadful red dust of the winter months no longer obscured everything. I have often, between April and November, not known what was within an approaching bank of solid red cloud, until the shouts of the unseen little "Voor-looper" warned me that a huge waggon and its span of perhaps twenty or thirty oxen had to be avoided.

But after November, dust gives place to mud on the roads—mud of a singularly tenacious quality, formed from the fertile red clay soil. I don't believe it rains anywhere so hard as it does in Natal, and during the summer months it is never safe to

part for a single hour from the very best waterproof cloak which you can procure, or from a substantial umbrella. Round Maritzburg a thunderstorm raged nearly every summer afternoon, coming up about three o'clock. But when, by any chance, that thunderstorm passed us by, we regretted it bitterly, for the oppressive, suffocating heat was then ever so much worse. Even the poor fowls used to go about with their beaks open and their wings held well away from their sides, literally gasping for breath. One was prepared for thunderstorms, even on the largest scale, when they came up with the usual accompaniments of massed clouds, rumbling or crashing thunder, and were followed by a deluge of rain ; but I could not get used to what I have never seen anywhere else, and which could only be described as a "bolt from the blue."

A very few days after my arrival at Maritzburg at the end of 1875, I was standing one afternoon in the shade of my little house on a hill, anxiously watching the picturesque arrival of an ox-waggon laden with my boxes. It was in the very early summer, and the exigencies of settling in left me no time to worry about the thunderstorms, of which, of course, I had often heard. A more serene and brilliant afternoon could not be imagined, and it was not even hot—at all events, out of the sun. My two small boys, as usual, trotted after me

like dogs, and clamoured to assist at the arrival of the waggon ; so I lifted the little one up in my arms and stood there, with an elder boy clinging to my skirts. Suddenly, out of the blue unclouded sky, out of the blaze of golden sunshine, came a flash and a crash which seemed as if it must be the crack of doom. No words at my command can give any idea of the intolerable blinding glare of the light which seemed to wrap us round, or of the rending sound, as if the universe were being torn asunder. I suppose I flung myself on the ground, because I was crouching there, holding the little boys beneath me with some sort of protective instinct, when in a second or two of time it had all passed, for I heard only a slight and distant rumble. I do not believe the sun had ceased shining for an instant, though its light had seemed to be extinguished by that blaze of fire. Never can I forget my amazement, an amazement which even preceded my deep thankfulness at finding we were absolutely unhurt, the fearless little boys only inquiring, "What was that, Mummy ?" There had been no time for their rosy cheeks even to pale. I wonder what colour I was. I looked at the little stone house with astonishment to find it still there, for I had expected to see nothing but a heap of ruins. Nay, it seemed miraculous that the hills all round should still be standing.

I only saw one more flash equally bad during my

two summers in Natal, and that was whilst a thunderstorm was raging, accompanied by terrific hail. Of course, I was then in a house and trying to distract my thoughts from the weather, which I knew must be annihilating my lovely garden, by dispensing afternoon tea. I am certain *that* flash came down upon the tea-tray, for when I lifted up my head (I defy any one not to cower before a stream of electricity which seems poured upon you out of a jug), I felt the same surprise at seeing my cups and saucers unshattered. I am sure they had jumped about, for I heard them, but they had recovered their equanimity by the time I had. Almost every day one saw in the newspapers an account of some death by lightning, and I know of one only too true story, in which our Kaffir washerman was the victim. He had left our house one fine Monday morning with a huge bag of clothes on his back, which he intended to wash in the river at the foot of the hill, when he observed one of these thunderstorms coming up unusually early, and so took shelter in the verandah of a small cottage by the roadside. After the worst of the storm had passed he was preparing to step outside, when a violent flash and a deafening thunderclap passed over the little house. The lightning must have been attracted by a nail carelessly sticking up in its shingled roof. The poor Kaffir chanced to be standing exactly beneath this nail and was struck



down dead at once. I was told that he was in the act of speaking, promising some one that he would return the same way that very afternoon.

The streets of Maritzburg used, in my day, to be mended or hardened with a sort of ironstone which abounds in the district, and in one of these daily thunderstorms it was not uncommon to see the electricity rising up as it were from the ground to meet the descending fluid. Of course, the rivers soon become impassable, and I have a vivid recollection of four guests, who had ridden out rather earlier than usual one afternoon to have tea with me, being kept in our tiny house all night. More than one attempt was made before dark to find and use the little wooden bridge over the stream, which could hardly be called a river, but its whereabouts could not even be perceived, and the horses steadily refused to go out of their depth. So there was nothing for it except to return, drenched to the skin, and bivouac under our very small roof for the night.

And yet one is glad of these same rains after the long dry winter, when all vegetation seems to disappear off the baked earth and the cattle become so thin that it is a wonder the gaunt skeletons of the poor trek-oxen can support the weight of their enormous spreading horns. The changes of temperature in winter were certainly very trying. The day began fresh and cold and bracing, but the

brilliant sunshine soon changed that into what might be called a very hot English summer's day. About four o'clock, when the sun sloped towards the western hills, it began to grow cold again, and no wrap or greatcoat seemed too warm to put on then. By night one was only too glad of as big a fire on the open hearth as could be provided, for fuel was scarce and very expensive in those days. Doubtless, the railway has improved all those conditions; but Natal, as far as I saw it, is not a well-wooded country, except on the Native Reserves, and the only forest—"bush," as they call it in Australia—which I saw, cost me a fifty-mile ride to get to it!

Our poor Kaffir servants used to get violent and prostrating colds in winter, in spite of each being supplied with an old greatcoat which had once belonged to a soldier. This the master provides; but if the man himself can raise an aged and dilapidated tunic besides, he is supremely happy. Anything so grotesque as this attire cannot well be imagined, for the red garment (it was almost unrecognisable as ever having been a tunic by that time) is worn with perfectly bare legs, a feather or two stuck jauntily on the head or with a crownless hat, and the true dandy adds a cartridge-case passed through a wide hole in the lobe of his ear and filled with snuff! Nor will any Kaffir stir out of doors without a long stick, on account of the snakes: but only the police used to be allowed to

carry the knobkerry, which is a sort of South African shillelagh and a very formidable weapon.

It always seemed strange to me that a climate which was, on the whole, so healthy for human beings should not be favourable to animal life. Dogs do not thrive there at all, and soon become infested with ticks. One heard constantly of the native cattle being decimated by strange and weird diseases, and horses, especially imported horses, certainly require the greatest care. They must never be turned out whilst the dew is on the grass, unless with a sort of muzzling nosebag on, and the snakes are a perpetual danger to them, though the bite is not always fatal, for there are many varieties of snakes which are not venomous. Still, a native horse is always on the look-out for snakes and dreads them exceedingly. One night I was cantering down the main street of Maritzburg on a quiet old pony on my way to the Legislative Council, where I wanted to hear a very interesting debate on the native question (which was the burning one of that day), and my pony suddenly leaped off the ground like an antelope and then shied right across the road. This panic arose from his having stepped on a thin strip of zinc cut from a packing-case which must have been opened, as usual, outside the store or large shop which we were passing. As soon as the pony put his foot on one end of the long curled-up shaving, it must have risen up and

struck him sharply, waking unpleasant memories of former encounters with snakes.

Railways were but a dream of the near future in my day. Indeed, the first sod of the first railway—that between Durban and Pietermaritzburg—was only turned on January 1, 1876, amid great enthusiasm. A mail-cart made a tri-weekly trip between the two towns—fifty-two miles apart—and that was horsed, but on anything like a journey either oxen or mules were used.

I have seen an ox-wagon arriving at a ball, with pretty young ladies inside its sheltering hood, who had been seated there all day long, having started in their ball-dresses directly after breakfast! Mules were in great request for draught purposes, and up to a point they answered admirably, jogging along without distress over bad roads which would soon have knocked up even the staunchest horses. But a mule is such an unreliable animal, and his character for obstinacy is thoroughly well deserved. When a mule, or a team of mules, stops on a particularly sticky bit of road, no power on earth will move him, and there is nothing for it but to await his good pleasure. I have, two or three times, journeyed behind a team of sixteen mules, and I always suffered great anxiety lest they should cease to respond to the incessant cries of their "Cape-boy" driver, or the still more persuasive arguments of his assistant, who bore quite a collec-

tion of whips of different lengths for emergencies. Happily the roads were then in fairly good order, and beyond a tendency to drop into a slow walk at the slightest hill the mules behaved irreproachably.

Locomotion was the great difficulty in those days, and we island-dwellers cannot easily realise the vast and trackless spaces which lie between the specks of townships on a huge continent. Natal is magnificently watered and grassed in the summer, but the big rivers are not only a hindrance to journeying, but from a sanitary point of view they are as undrinkable as the Nile, and probably for the same reasons. Still, they are there, and future generations will doubtless use them for irrigation and canals and all the needs of advancing civilisation.

In my day the Boer was quite an unconsidered factor, and we felt we were performing a Quixotically generous action when, at his own earnest entreaty, we took him and his debts and his native troubles on our own shoulders in 1876. He was always extremely dirty, and about a thousand years behind the rest of the civilised world in his ideas. His religion was a superstition worthy of the Middle Ages, and his notions of morality went a good deal further back than even those primitive times.

I confess the only Boer I ever was personally

brought into contact with seemed to me a delightful person ! This is how it happened. Soon after my arrival in Maritzburg, a bazaar was held in aid of some local literary undertaking. Bazaars were happily of very rare occurrence in those parts, and this one created quite an excitement and realised an astonishingly large sum of money. The race-week had been chosen for the purpose of catching customers among the numerous visitors to Pietermaritzburg in that gay time, and the wiles employed seemed very successful. I never heard how or why he got there, but I only know that a stout, comfortable, well-to-do Dutch farmer suddenly appeared at the door of the bazaar. He was, of course, at once assailed by pretty flower-girls and lucky-bag bearers, and cigars and kittens were promptly pressed on him. But the old gentleman had a plan and a method of his own, on which he proceeded to act. He had not one single syllable of English, so it was a case of deeds not words. He began at the very first stall and worked his way all round. At each stall he pointed to the biggest thing on it, and held out a handful of coins in payment. He then shouldered his purchase as far as the next stall, where he deposited it as a gift to the lady selling, bought her biggest object, and went on round the hall on the same principle. When it came to my turn he held out to me the largest wax-doll I ever beheld, and carried off a huge and unwieldy

doll's house which entirely eclipsed even his burly figure. My next door (or rather stall) neighbour had a table full of glass and china, and she consequently viewed the approach of this article of bazaar commerce with natural misgiving, but as our ideal customer relieved her of a very large ugly breakfast set, she managed to make room for the miniature house until she could arrange a raffle and so get rid of it. The last I saw of that Boer, who must have contributed largely to our receipts, was his leading a very small donkey, which he had just bought at the last stall, away by a blue ribbon halter. I believe it was the only "object" in the whole bazaar which could have possibly been of the slightest practical use to him, but the contrast between the weak-kneed and frivolously attired donkey and its sturdy purchaser was irresistibly comic. No one seemed to know in the least who he was, but we supposed he must have come down for the races and backed the winners very successfully.

Our little house stood on a hill about a mile from Maritzburg, and, remembering the formation of the surrounding country, one realises how badly the towns in Natal, and probably all over South Africa, are placed for purposes of defence. Every town, or even little hamlet or township, which I ever saw, stood in the middle of a wide plain with low hills all round it, so it is easy for me to realise how soon cannon planted on those hills would wreck

buildings. There was a great and agreeable difference in the temperature, however, up on that little hill, but towards the close of the dry winter season the water-supply became an anxiety. In spite of the extremely cold nights up there, any plant for which I could spare a daily pail of water blossomed beautifully all through the winter. I was advised to select my favourite rose-bushes before the summer rains had ceased, and to have the baths of the family emptied over them every day, which I did with perfect success, and was even able to include some azaleas and camellias in the list of the favoured shrubs.

I was much struck with the rapid growth of trees in Natal, and it was astonishing to see the height and solidity of trees planted only ten years before, especially the eucalyptus. But grass walks or lawns are much discouraged in a garden on account of the facility they afford as cover for snakes, and red paths and open spaces are to be seen everywhere instead. Even the lawn-tennis of that day was played on smooth courts of firmly stamped and rolled red clay. I wonder how the golf-players manage, for play they do I am certain, as nothing ever induces either a golfer or a cricketer to forego his game.

One morning, very early, I was taken to the market, and it certainly was an extraordinary sight. The market-place is always one of the most



salient features of a South African town, and is the centre of local gossip, just as is the "bazaar" of the East. It was an immense open space thronged with buyers and sellers; whites, Kaffirs, coolies, emigrants from St. Helena, and many on-lookers like myself. It was all under Government control and seemed very well managed. There were official inspectors of the meat offered for sale, and duly authorised weights and scales, round which surged a vociferous crowd. I was specially invited to view the butter segt down from the Boer farms up country, and I cannot say it was an appetising sight. A huge hide, very indifferently tanned, was unrolled for my edification, and it certainly contained a substance distantly resembling butter, packed into it, but apparently at widely differing intervals of time. The condiment was of various colours, and—how shall I put it?—strengths; milk-sieves appeared also to have been unknown at that farm, for cows' hair formed a noticeable component part of that mass of butter. However, I was assured that it found ready and willing purchasers, even at four shillings a pound, and that it was quite possible to remake it, as it were, and subject it to a purifying process. I confess I felt thankful that the butter my small family consumed was made under my own eyes.

Waggons laden with firewood were very conspicuous, and their loads disappeared rapidly, as

did also piles of lucerne and other green forage. There was but little poultry for sale, and very few vegetables. I remember noticing in all the little excursions I made, within some twenty miles of Maritzburg, how different the Natal colonist, at least of those days, was from the Australian or New Zealand pioneer. At various farmhouses where there was plenty of evidence of a kind of rough and ready prosperity, and much open-handed hospitality and friendliness, there would be only preserved milk and tinned butter available. Now these two items must have indeed been costly by the time they reached the farms I speak of. Yet there were herds of cattle grazing around. Nor would there be poultry of any sort forthcoming, nor a sign of a garden. Of course, it was not my place to criticise ; but if I ventured on a question, I was always told, "Oh, labour is so difficult to get. You know, the Kaffirs won't work." I longed to suggest that the young people I saw lounging about might very well turn to and lend a hand, at all events to start a poultry yard, or dairy, or vegetable garden.

Now, at Fort Napier—the only fortified hill near Maritzburg—every little hollow and ravine was utilised by the soldiers stationed there as a garden. The men, of course, work in these little plots themselves and grow beautiful vegetables. Potatoes and pumpkins, cabbages and onions, only need to

be planted to grow luxuriantly. Why cannot this be done in the little farms around ? I am afraid I took a selfish interest in the question, as it was so difficult, and often impossible, to procure even potatoes. Such things grow much more easily, I was told, at Durban, so probably those difficulties have disappeared with the opening of the railway—that very railway of which I saw the first sod turned. My own attempt at a vegetable garden suffered from its being perched on the top of a hill, where water was difficult to get ; but I was very successful with some poultry, in spite of having to wage constant war against hawks and snakes.

How fortunate it is that one remembers the laughs of one's past life better than its tears ! That morning visit to the Pietermaritzburg market stands out distinctly in my memory chiefly on account of an absurd incident I witnessed. I had been much interested and amused looking round, not only at the strange and characteristic crowd, but at my many acquaintances marketing for themselves. I had listened to the shouts of the various auctioneers who were selling all manner of heterogeneous wares, when I noticed some stalwart Kaffirs bearing on their heads large open baskets filled entirely with coffee-pots of every size and kind. Roughly speaking, there must have been something like a hundred coffee-pots in those baskets. They were just leaving an improvised

auction-stand, and following them closely, with an air of proud possession on his genial countenance, was a specially beloved friend of my own, who I may mention, was also the beloved friend of all who knew him. "Are *all* those coffee-pots yours?" I inquired. "Yes, indeed; I have just bought them," he answered. "You must know I am a collector of coffee-pots and have a great many already; but how lucky I have been to pick up some one else's collection as well, and so cheap too!"

The Kaffirs were grinning, and there seemed a general air of amusement about, which I could not at all understand until it was explained to me later that my friend had just bought his own collection of coffee-pots. His wife thought that the space they occupied in her store-room could be better employed, and, believing that their owner would not attend the market that day, had sent the whole lot down to be sold. She told me afterwards that her dismay was indeed great when her Kaffirs brought them back in triumph, announcing that the "Inkose" (chieftain) had just bought them, so the poor lady had to pay the auctioneer's fees, and replace the coffee-pots on their shelves with what resignation she could command.

One of my pleasantest memories of Natal, especially as seen by the light of recent events, is of a visit I paid to the annual joint encampment of the Natal Carabineers and the Durban Mounted Rifles.

It was only what would be called, I suppose, a flying camp, and the ground chosen that year (August 1876) was on "Botha's Flat," halfway between Maritzburg and Durban. I well remember how beautiful was the drive from Maritzburg over the Inchanga Pass, and how workmanlike the little encampment looked as I came upon it (after some break-neck driving), with its small tents dotted on a green down.

Although one little knew it, that same encampment was the school where were trained the men who have so lately shown the worth of the lessons they were then learning. The whole training seemed practical and admirable in the highest degree. It had to be carried out amid every sort of difficulty, and, indeed, one might almost say discouragement. In those distant days such bodies of volunteers were struggling on with very little money, very little public interest or sympathy, and with great difficulty on the part of the members of these plucky little forces in obtaining leave for even this short annual drill. I was told that both the corps were much stronger on paper, but that the absentees could not be spared from the stores, or sugar estates, or offices to which they belonged.

I had, much earlier in the year, at our midsummer, in fact, seen some excellent swimming drill at certain athletic sports held in the little park at Maritzburg, through which a river runs. The

keenest competition on that occasion lay between these same Natal Carabineers and a smart body of Mounted Police. The most difficult part of the stream, with crumbling banks and mud-holes, was chosen, and at a given signal they all plunged in on horseback, holding their carbines high above their heads. In some cases the riders slipped off their horses and swam by their side, mounting again directly the opposite bank was gained; and I noticed how well trained were the horses, and how at their master's whistle they stood still to allow them to remount instantly. How well this training has stood the test of practical warfare let the late campaign tell. And we must also bear in mind that all this training was going on nearly thirty years ago!

It was partly to show my own sympathy and interest in this same movement that I accepted the invitation of the commandant to spend a couple of nights at the camp and see what they were doing. A lonely little inn hard by, where a tiny room could be secured for me, made this excursion possible, and I can never forget some of the impressions of that visit. When I read in the papers how splendidly the Natal colonist came forward in the late campaign, even from the purely military point of view, I remember that camp, and I understand that I was then watching the forging of those links in our long imperial chain. The men who came out so

grandly as "soldiers of the Queen," no matter by what local names they might have been called, are probably the sons of the stalwart volunteers I saw, but the teaching of that and succeeding encampments has evidently borne good fruit.

It was indeed serious work they were all engaged on during those bright winter days, and my visit was not allowed to interrupt for a moment the drill which seemed to go on all through the daylight hours. What helped to make the lesson so valuable to the earnest learners was, that all went precisely as though a state of war existed. There were no servants, no luxuries—all was exactly as it probably was in the late campaign.

I dined at the officers' mess that evening. Our table-cloth was of canvas, our candles were tied to cross pieces of wood, and the food was served in the tins in which it was cooked. Tea was our only beverage, but the open air had made us all so hungry that everything seemed delicious. It was, I remember, bitterly cold, and the slight tent did not afford much shelter from the icy wind. How well I recollect my great longing to wrap myself up in the one luxury of the camp—a large and beautiful goatskin karosse on which I was seated! But that would have been to betray my chilliness, which would never have done. We separated somewhere about half-past eight—for we had dined as soon as ever it got too dark to go on drilling—but not before

the whole encampment had assembled to sing "God save the Queen," with all their heart as well as with all their lungs,—a fitting finish to the day's work.

I had some other delightful rides in Natal, one especially on the peaceful errand of a visit to a Wesleyan Mission station about a dozen miles off at Edendale. It was a perfect winter's day, and the road was fairly good.

I have often wondered why our own beloved Mother Church employs such slow and cumbrous machinery in dealing with native races. She is apparently considering the subject in the time it takes for the Baptists or Wesleyans to start a settlement. So long ago as 1851 a certain James Allison, a Wesleyan missionary who had worked among the Basuto and Amaswasi tribes, bought some six thousand acres hereabout from old Pretorius, the Dutch President of Natal, and set to work to teach the Kaffirs not only Christianity but citizenship. Now-a-days there are two chapels and four schools, all built by the natives themselves, as well as several Sunday Schools. In former days there had also been an industrial school which had turned out capital artisans, but the yearly grant of £100 from Government had been withdrawn before my visit, and the school was in consequence closed. The existing schools only receive fifty pounds a year from outside, and all the other expenses of the



flourishing little Mission are borne by the people themselves. Such neat, comfortable brick houses and such gay gardens, to say nothing of "provision grounds" full of potatoes, pumpkins, and even green peas. Lots of poultry everywhere, and an air of neat prosperity over everything. I was told there were many excellent Norwegian Missions on the borders of Zululand, and I hope they still flourish, for it is difficult to overrate the value of such settlements as a factor in the spread of civilisation as well as in that of Christianity.

But I had really only one long ride during my thirteen months in Natal, and that was later in the same winter season, in fact, quite at the end—in September. Five cruel months of absolutely dry weather had reduced the roads to fine red powder, and the vegetation to sun-dried hay, but still the air was beautiful and exhilarating as we set forth—a little party of four, including a Kaffir guide—very early one lovely morning. At first we headed for Edendale, but soon left it on our right, and pushed on, before the sun got too hot, and whilst our somewhat sorry steeds were fresh, for "Taylor's"—a roadside shanty twenty miles off. Our destination was a fine forest called "Seven-mile Bush," only fifty miles away but with several hill-ranges to be crossed. Two hours' bait started us again at 2 P.M. in good fettle, and it was fairly easy going to Eland's River, which we reached at 4 o'clock,

and where we off-saddled for half-an-hour. The rough waggon-track which had been our only road had been steadily rising ever since our first halt, and we were now amid beautiful undulating downs with distant ranges ever in front of us. No sooner had we climbed painfully over one saddle than another seemed to block our way, and I confess my courage rather sank when, with twilight fast coming on and the path getting steeper with every mile, I inquired of the guide how far off we still were. Of course, my question had to be in pantomime, and his answer—*five* dips of his hand towards the hills—told me we had yet five low ranges to cross.

The last few miles seemed a nightmare of stumbling up and down break-neck places on tired horses in the dark, and the contrast of a charming little house at last, with lights and blazing fires, was all the more delightful. Indeed, it seemed to us, stumbling out of the darkness and a chilling mist, that nothing short of Aladdin's lamp could at all account for the transport of all the nice furniture, pictures, glass and china along such impassable tracks. However, they were all there, and everything which goes to make up a pretty and refined home besides, including a charming hostess and two rosy children. We were waited on by Kaffir boys in long white garments, looking for all the world like black-faced choristers. But after gallons of tea and a capital supper,

bed seemed the most attractive suggestion, and many hours of dreamless sleep wiped away all fatigue and started us off early next morning in splendid health and spirits to explore the magnificent forest close by.

I have often thought that the three most distinct memories of beautiful scenes, which must ever remain vividly before me, are, my first view of the Himalayas, early one morning from the Grand Trunk Road, when I complained that I could not see them, and discovered it was because I had not looked half high enough. That was indeed a revelation of solemn mountain grandeur. Next to it ranks the mighty sweep of the Niagara river as you see it from the railway, and a few moments later behold it thundering over the edge. And the third is that long, lonely morning in the magnificent forest in the heart of Natal, the recollection of which dwarfs all other trees to insignificance. The growth not only of giant timber but of exquisite under-growth of ferns and delicate foliage was indeed superb. Of flowers there were none, because the sun could not enter those cathedral glades except at the very edge and outskirt where the big trees had been felled.

I confess I should greatly have preferred to wander as far as I dared, and looked longer into the old Elephant pits, and heard more stories of the comparatively recent dates at which tigers, panthers,

and leopards could be met with. And I also wanted to go deep enough among the overhanging *lianes*, or monkey-ropes as they call them, to see, perchance, the great baboons swinging on them. But our host evidently regarded his new saw-mill as the greatest point of interest, and thither we betook ourselves—all too soon for my enjoyment. There, indeed, one beheld a marvellous chaos of wheels and chains and saws, which took hold of these same giant trunks and tossed them out and passed them from one to the other, until they emerged, shaven and shorn into the planks of every-day commerce. Very wonderful, no doubt, and one asked one's-self every moment, "how did these huge masses of machinery get over that last range?" But still I feel that it was the forest I came to see and I was only peeping into it.

However, next day I had a fine long ramble in it, and explored to my heart's content, but it was damp and drizzling, and so it remained the day after that again, when we started very early for home. The horses were quite fresh and rested, and carried us well, in spite of the extreme slipperiness of the mountain tracks. Curiously enough as soon as we got clear of the ranges we rode into the thickest fog I have ever seen. We could only go at a slow walk in Indian file, with the Kaffir leading, and every few minutes he got off his rough little pony and patted the ground to *feel* where we were. They

said it was a sea fog, but it wrapped us up as thoroughly as if it had been the thickest of blankets, and one felt quite helpless. Certainly nothing is so demoralising as a fog, and I never wish to repeat that morning's experience. We should have tumbled over "Taylor's," or rather passed it, though it stood quite close to the track, if a cock had not fortunately crowed, and the leading pony neighed in reply, calling forth a chorus of barks from quite unseen dogs, who dared not venture an inch from the sheltering porch.

Although my stay in Natal lasted very little over a year, I made many friends there, and it is with sympathising regret I often saw in the roll-call of her local defenders the familiar names of those whom I remember as bright-eyed children. They have all sprung to arms in defence of the fair land of their fathers' adoption, and when the tale of this crisis in the history of Natal comes to be written, the names of her gallant young defenders will stand out on its pages in letters of light, and the record of their noble deeds will serve as an example for ever and for ever. So will they not have laid down their lives in vain.

## VI

### "STELLA CLAVISQUE MARIS INDICI"

"THE Star and the Key of the Indian Ocean" lay smiling before me on Easter Sunday, April 1878.

The little schooner in which I had come across from Natal had just dropped her anchor in the harbour of Port Louis after seventeen days of light and baffling winds. The tedium of that past time slipped quickly out of my mind, however, as the fast-growing daylight revealed the beauties of Mauritius, a little island which I had so often read of and yet so little expected ever to behold. The interest of the tragic tale of "Paul and Virginia" had riveted my wandering attention during the French reading-lessons of my youth, though I always secretly wondered why Virginia had been such a goose as to decline help from a sailor, apparently only because he was somewhat insufficiently clad. But I should not have dared to give utterance to this opinion, so prudish was the domestic atmosphere of those early days.

The first real interest I felt in Mauritius arose from the frequent mention of the little island as

a health-resort, in some charming letters of Miss Eden's published about five-and-twenty years ago, but written long before that date, when she was keeping house for her brother, Lord Auckland, then Governor-General of India. Miss Eden speaks of many friends as well as of Indian tourists (for "Paget, M.P.'s" existed apparently even in those distant times) having gone for change of air to "the Mauritius" and coming back quite strong and robust. She mentions one instance of a whole opera company, whose health gave way in Calcutta, and who made the excursion, returning in time for their next season with restored health, and she often longs in vain for such a change for her hard-worked brother.

But all this must have been many years before the first mysterious outbreak of fever which ravaged the place in 1867. I was assured that before that date the reputation of the pretty little island had stood very high as a sanatorium, but no doctor could give me any reason for the sudden appearance of this virulent fever. There were, of course, many theories, each of which had earnest supporters. Some said the great hurricane which had just before swept over the island brought the malaria on its wings. Others declared the *deboisement* which had been carried on to a devastating extent in order to increase the area available for sugar-cane planting was to blame; whilst a third faction put all

the trouble down to the great influx of coolie immigrants introduced about that date to work in the cane-fields. Perhaps the truth lies in a blending of these three principal theories. Anyway, I felt it sad and hard that so really lovely an island should have such dark and trying days behind as well as before it.

But, after seventeen days of glaring lonely seas and dark monotonous nights, one is not apt to think of anything beyond the immediate "blessings of the land," and I gazed with profound content on the chain of volcanic hills, down whose rugged sides many *cascades* tumbled their gleaming silver. Coral reefs, with white foam tossing over them, in spite of the calm sapphire sea on which we were gently floating into harbour, seemed spread all around us, and indeed I believe these *réefs* circle the whole island with a dangerous though protecting girdle. Sloping ground, covered with growth of differing greens, some showing the bluish hue of the sugar-cane, others the more vivid colouring of a coarse tall grass, led the eye gently down to the flowering trees and foliage round the clustering houses of Port Louis, whose steep high-pitched roofs looked so suggestive of tropic rains. Port Louis was once evidently a stately capital, and large handsome houses still remain. These have, however, nearly all been turned into offices or banks, and the fine large Government House, or



*Hôtel du Gouvernement*, is always empty as to its numerous bedrooms. Hardly a white person sleeps with impunity in Port Louis, though all the business—official and private—is carried on there, and it contains many excellent shops.

You must climb up, however, some few miles by the steep little railway before you realise how really lovely the scenery of Mauritius can be. All in miniature, it is true, but very ambitious in character. Except for the glowing tints of the volcanic rocks and the tropic vegetation, one might be looking at a bit of Switzerland through the wrong end of a telescope ; but nowhere else have I ever seen such tints as the bare mountain sides take at sunset. The tufa rocks glow like wet porphyry, and so magical are the hues that one half expects to see the grand recumbent figure of the old warrior of the Corps de Garde hill outlined against the purple sky, rise up and salute the island which once was his.

Mauritius is in many ways an object-lesson which is not without its significance just now. Here we have a little island thoroughly French in its history and people, and inhabited by many of the *vieille roche* who fled there in the Terror days. Battles between French and English by land and sea raged round its sunny shores in the first few years of the just-ended century. Dauntless attacks and valiant resistance have left heroic

memories behind them. We took it by *force majeure* in 1811, but it was not until the great settling up at the Restoration in 1814 that the hatchet may be said to have been finally buried, and the two nationalities began to pull together comfortably. I was rather surprised to see how thoroughly French Mauritius still is in language and in characteristics ; but the result is indeed satisfactory. I found it quite the most highly civilised of the colonies I then knew, and from the social point of view there was nothing left to be desired. The early class of French settler had evidently been of a much higher type than our own rough-and-ready colonist, and the refinement so introduced had influenced the whole place. Did I find any race-hatred, oppression, or heart-burnings ? No, indeed ; of all the dependencies of our Empire not one has come forward more generously or more splendidly with substantial offers of help than that little lonely isle, " the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean." I venture to say, speaking from my experience of those days, that the King has no more loyal subjects than the Mauritians.

It may be that the trials and troubles we have all borne there side by side in the past half-century have knitted and bound us together. We have had hurricane, pestilence, and fire to contend with, besides the chronic hard times of the sugar industry. In these fast-following calamities French and English

have stood shoulder to shoulder, and the only race or religious rivalry has been in good and noble deeds. In the Zulu War of 1881, when Sir Bartle Frere sent a ship down with despatches to my dear husband, then the Lieutenant-Governor of Mauritius, urgently asking for help to "hold the fort" until the English reinforcements could arrive, Mauritius sprang to her feet then as now, and gave willing and substantial help. Every soldier who was able to stand up started at twenty-four hours' notice for Durban. The same day the mayor of Port Louis held a meeting, at which a volunteer corps of doctors and nurses was at once raised, with plenty of money to equip them, and they, as well as cooks and cows—both much needed—were on their way to Durban before another sun had set. It was indeed gratifying to hear afterwards that not only had our little military effort been of great service, but that the abundance of fresh milk supplied had helped many a case of dysentery among the garrison at Durban to turn the corner on the road to recovery.

Nothing can be much more beautiful than the view from the back verandah at "Réduit," as the fine country Government House, built by the Chevalier de la Brillane for the Governors of Mauritius more than a century ago, is called. Before you spreads an expanse of English lawn only broken by clumps of gay foliaged shrubs or beds of flowers,

and behind that again is the wooded edge of the steep ravine, where the mischievous "jackos" hide, who come up at night to play havoc with the sugar-canes on its opposite side. The only day of the week on which they ventured up was Sunday afternoon, when all the world was silent and sleepy.

It used to be my delight to watch from an upper bedroom window the stealthy appearance of the old sentinel monkeys, who first peered cautiously up and evidently reconnoitred the ground thoroughly. After a few moments of careful scouting a sort of chirrup would be heard, which seemed the signal for the rest of the colony to scramble tumultuously up the bank. Such games as then started among the young ones, such antics and tumblings and rompings! But all the time the sentinels never relaxed their vigilance. They spread like a cordon round the gambolling young ones, and kept turning their horribly wise human-looking heads from side to side incessantly, only picking and chewing a blade of grass now and then. The mothers seemed to keep together, and doubtless gossiped; but let my old and perfectly harmless Skye terrier toddle round the corner of the verandah, and each female would dart into the group of playing monkeys, seize her property by its nearest leg, toss it over her shoulder, and quicker than the eye could follow she would have disappeared down the ravine. The sentinels had uttered their warning cry directly, but

they always remained until the very last, and retreated in good order ; though there was no cause for alarm, as "Boxer's" thoughts were fixed on the peacocks—apt to trespass at those silent and unguarded hours—and not on the monkeys at all !

This is a sad digression, but yet it has not led us far from that halcyon scene, which is so often before the eyes of my memory. The beautiful changing hues of the Indian Ocean bind the horizon in this and every other extensive island view, but between us and it there arises in the distance a very forest of tall green masts, the spikes of countless aloe blossoms. I have heard Mauritius described as "an island with a barque always to windward," and there is much truth in the saying ; though one could easily mistake the glancing wing of a huge seagull or the long white floating tail-feathers of the "boatswain bird" for the shimmer of a distant sail.

I fear it is a very prosaic confession to make, but one fact which added considerably to my comfort in Mauritius was the excellence of the cook of that day. I hear that education and Board schools have now improved him off the face of the island, but he used to be a very clever mixture of the best of French and Indian cookery traditions. The food supply was poor. We got our beef from Madagascar, and our mutton came from Aden. We found it answer to import half-a-dozen little sheep

at a time ; they cost about £1 apiece for purchase and carriage, but could be allowed only a month's run in the beautiful park of five hundred acres which surrounded Réduit. More than that made them ill, so rich and luscious was the grass ; for sheep, like human beings, seem to need a good deal of exercise, and, as Abernethy advised the rich gourmet to do, ought to "live on a shilling a day and earn it."

These same sheep, however, or rather one of the servants, gave me one of the worst frights of my life. We were at luncheon one day when an under servant, who never appeared in the dining-room, rushed in calling out, "Oh, Excellence, *quel malheur !*" then he lapsed into Hindustani mixed with patois, declaring there had been a terrible railway accident and that *all* were injured and two killed outright ! As this same line, which had a private station in the Park about a mile away, constantly brought us up friends at that hour, I nearly fainted with horror ; and yet I remember how angry, though relieved, I felt when the same agitated individual wailed out, "and they were all so fat !" One is apt to be indignant at having been tricked into emotion before one is grateful for the relief to one's mind.

Almost the first thing which struck me in Mauritius was the absence of cows as well as sheep. I never saw a cow grazing, and yet there seemed

plenty of good milk, and even a pallid pat of fresh butter appeared at breakfast. But there were really plenty of cows, only the coolies kept them in their houses, to the despair of the sanitary inspectors, who insisted on proper cowsheds being built at an orthodox distance from the little *case* or native house, only to find that the family moved down and lived with the cow as before. One year there was an outbreak of pleuro-pneumonia among the poor cows, and I heard many pathetic stories of the despair of the owners when sentence of death had to be pronounced in the infected districts against their beloved cows. It was impossible to make the coolies understand that this was a precautionary measure, and the large and liberal compensation which they received seemed to bring no consolation whatever with it. I was assured that in many instances the owner of the doomed animal would fling himself at the inspector's feet, beseeching him to spare the life of the cow, and to kill him (the coolie) instead !

The roads in Mauritius were admirably kept, but very hard and very hilly. The big horse, usually imported from Australia, soon knocked his legs to pieces if much used up and down these hills ; but an excellent class of hardy, handsome, little pony came to us from Pégou and other parts of Burma, as well as from Timor and Java. These animals were very expensive to buy, but excellent for work,

and I should think would have made splendid polo ponies ; but polo did not seem to be much played in Mauritius at that date.

Since my day another frightful hurricane has devastated the poor little island, but I heard many stories of former ones. During the summer season—that is, from about November until March or April—the local Meteorological Office keeps a sharp eye on the barometer, and every arrangement is cut and dry, ready to be acted upon at a moment's warning, for a *coup de vent* is a rapid traveller and does not dawdle on its way.

We had many false alarms during my stay, for it sometimes happens that the hurrying winds are diverted from the track they started on, and so we escaped, *quitte pour la peur*. When the first warning gun fired all the ships in harbour began to get ready to go outside, for the greatest mischief done in the big hurricane of 1868 was from the crowded vessels in the comparatively small harbour of Port Louis grinding against each other ; to say nothing of those ships which, as Kipling sings, were

“ Flung to roost with the startled crows.”

At the second signal gun, which meant that the force of the wind was increasing and travelling towards us, the ships got themselves out of harbour, and every business man who lived in the country betook himself to the railway station, as after the third gun, which might be heard within even half-



an-hour, the trains would cease to run. I chanced to be returning from Port Louis on one of these occasions, and certainly the railway station presented a curious sight. All my acquaintances seemed to be there, hurrying home with anxious and pre-occupied faces. Each man grasped a ham firmly in one hand and his despatch-box in the other, whilst his *pion*, or messenger, was following, closely laden with baskets of bread and groceries, and attended by coolies with live fowls and bottles of lamp oil! My own head servant, “Monsieur Jorge,” always made the least sign of a “blow” an excuse for demanding sundry extra rupees in hand for carriage money, and started directly in one of these queer little vehicles for a round of marketing in the neighbourhood.

At the first gun heard at Réduit an army of gardeners used to set to work to move the hundreds of large plants out of the verandahs into a big empty room close by. They were followed by the house-carpenter and his mates, armed with enormous iron wedges and sledge-hammers. These worthies proceeded to close the great clumsy hurricane shutters, which so spoil the outer effect of all Mauritian houses, and besides putting the heavy iron bars in their places, wedged them firmly down. It really looked as if the house was being prepared for a siege. Happily, my own experience did not extend beyond a couple of days of this state of

affairs, nor was any storm I assisted at dignified by the name of a hurricane, but I could form from these little experiences only too good an idea of what the real thing must be like. Personally, my greatest inconvenience arose from the pervading smell of the lamps, which were, of course, burning all day as well as all night, and from our never being able to get rid of the smell of food. One was so accustomed to the fresh-air life, with doors and windows always open, that these odours were very trying.

But the noise is, I think, what is least understood. Even in a "blow" it is truly deafening, and never ceases for an instant. At Réduit there was a long well-defended corridor upstairs, and I thought I would try and walk along its length. Not a breath of wind really got in, or the roof would soon have been whisked off the house ; but although I flatter myself I am tolerably brave, I could not walk down that corridor ! Every yard or so a resounding blow, as if from a cannon-ball, would come thundering against the outer side, whilst the noise of many waters descending in solid sheets on the roof, and the screams of the shrieking, whistling winds outside, were literally deafening. It was impossible to believe that any structure made by human hands could stand ; and yet that was not a hurricane ! Never shall I forget my last outdoor glimpse, which I was invited to take just before

the big hall-door on the leeward side was finally shut and barricaded. I could not have believed that the sky could be of such an inky blackness, except at one corner, where a triangle of the curtain of darkness, with sharply defined outlines, had apparently just been turned back to show the deep blood-red colouring behind. It was awful beyond all words to describe ; but "Monsieur Jorge," who held the door open for me, said : "Dat not real bad sky." He seemed hard to please, I thought.

However, a couple of days' imprisonment was all we suffered that time, and the instant the gale dropped, at sunrise on the second day, the rain ceased and the sun shone out. It was a curious scene the rapidly-opened shutters revealed. Every leaf was stripped off the trees, which were bare as mid-winter. A few of the smaller ones had been uprooted bodily and whisked away down the ravine. Some were found later literally standing on their heads a good way off. It was quite a new idea to me that roots could be snowy white, but they had been so completely washed bare of soil by the down-pouring rain that they were absolutely clean and white. A few hours later I was taken for a drive round some neighbouring cane-fields. Of course, the road was like the bed of a mountain torrent, and how the pony managed to steer himself and the gig among the boulders must ever remain a mystery. Already over three hundred

Malagashes (coolies) were at work covering up the exposed roots of the canes, for each plant stood in a large hole partly filled with water, which was rapidly draining away. The force of the wind seemed to have whirled the cane round and round until it stood, quite bare of its crown of waving leaves, in the middle of a hole. Had the sun reached these exposed roots nothing could have saved the plant.

But my memories must not be all meteorological. Rather let me return in thought to the merry and happy intercourse with pleasant friends, of which so many hours stand brightly out. In all the colonies I know hospitality is one of the cardinal virtues, and nowhere more so than in pretty little Mauritius. I heard many lamentations that in these altered times the gracious will far outran the restricted possibilities, but still there used to be pleasant dances, without end and number, most amusing cameron-fishing *déjeuners*, and *chasses au cerf* in the winter months. It so chanced that we had a guest hailing from Exmoor, who was bidden to one of these popular forms of *le sport*, and never shall I forget his horror at finding he was required to carry a gun and shoot a stag if he could ! No fox-hunter invited to assist at a battue of foxes in the Midlands could have been more shocked and disgusted, and it was quite in vain that we cited Scotch deer-stalking in excuse. This was *not* deer-

stalking he vowed, for you sat on a camp-stool in a thick forest and took pot shots at the poor animals as they were driven past certain spots! An excellent luncheon was served in the middle of the *chasse*, so it was always a favourite diversion, but the hospitable owner of one of the best deer districts told me that he had to inflict fines on these sportsmen who only wounded the poor deer. Some very handsome "heads" could be got among them however. But, indeed, I am constrained to say that the idea of sport, as we understand it, seemed rather undeveloped in that fairy island, and it was difficult to keep one's countenance when, in answer to the Governor's inquiry as to the success of a morning among the cane-fields in pursuit of red-legged partridges and quail, the sportsman rose in his place, bowed low, and answered, "Excéllence, j'ai tué un, mais j'ai blessé deux."

The annual race-meeting, held on the Champ-de-Mars outside Port Louis, was remarkable for the crowds of coolies it attracted from all parts of the island. The horses were the least important or interesting part of the performance, and the betting on even the principal races appeared to be confined to a few Arab merchants, who certainly did not look at all "horsey" in their gay and flowing robes. It so chanced that I was being driven home very late the night before the third principal day of one of these race-meetings, and I thought

the shuffling, sheeted crowds with which the roads were thronged by far the most curious and suggestive part of the proceedings. No cemetery giving up its silent sleepers could have furnished a more ghostly crew. Young and old, babes astride on their mothers' hips, older children carried by their fathers, aged men and girls in their shrouding veils, all gliding, barefooted, in absolute silence along the dusty roads in such a dense and never-ending crowd that my carriage could only move, and that with difficulty, at a foot's pace. It was a lovely starlight, cold night, and I had the hood of the victoria lowered so as to better take in the weird scene, to which the dangling cooking-pots carried by all, added a grotesque touch. At various parts of the road the wily Chinaman had hastily set up a little booth of palm branches, from which he dispensed refreshments of sorts doubtless at a high price. These moving masses were perfectly orderly, nor did they seem to require any restraining or even guiding force.

Next day I naturally looked out from my beautiful rose-wreathed stand on the Champ-de-Mars for these white-clad crowds, and there they were, sure enough, covering the slopes of the encircling natural amphitheatre, but to my astonishment, though it was barely noon and the principal race was yet to be run, the massed mob was rapidly dispersing. As a matter of fact, none of these fifty thousand coolie

spectators cared in the least about the races. That final Saturday of the race week had come to be regarded as a public holiday. Work was suspended at the sugar estates all over the Island, and the race meeting was just an occasion on which all expected to meet their friends. Every coolie had washed his garment to a snowy whiteness, and this, taken in conjunction with the vivid touches of colour dear to the Oriental eye, furnished by the babies' little scarlet caps and the red edging of the women's veils, made up an enchanting picture set against the vivid green and glowing blue of earth and sky.

It was always great fun when the flagship of the East Indian squadron paid us an all too brief visit ; and, indeed, the arrival of any man-of-war used to be made an excuse for a little extra gaiety. It was my special delight to get the midshipmen to come in batches and stay at Réduit, although I often found myself at my wits' end to provide them with game to shoot at, for that was what their hearts were most fixed on. They all brought up weird and obsolete fowling-pieces, which the moment they had finished breakfast they wanted to go and let off in the park. What fun those boys were, and what dears ! One chubby youth, being questioned as to whether midshipmen were permitted to marry, answered, "No, but sometimes there was a *candlestick* marriage."

“ A *what* ? ”

“ A candlestick marriage, sir,—not allowed, you know.”

“ Clandestine ” was the proper word, but the mistake had great success as a joke.

My young soldier guests were quite as gallant and susceptible to the charms of the bright eyes and pretty, gentle manners of my pet French girls, but I often felt disconcerted to find that at my numerous *bals privés* there was a difficulty in getting them to dance with each other, because the red-coated youths would not or could not speak one word of French, whereas that difficulty never seemed to weigh with the middy for a moment.

I dare say things are now different, and that improved mail and cable services have changed the loneliness of my day, when there was no cable beyond Aden and only a mail steamer once a month. I always felt as though we ourselves were on a ship anchored in the midst of a lonely ocean, and that once in four weeks another ship sped past us, casting on board mail bags and cablegrams. But even as we stood with stretched-out hands, craving for more news or more details of what news was flung to us, the passing steamer had sunk below the horizon, and we were left to possess our souls in what patience we might until the next mail day came round.

The consequence of this comparative isolation



was that few visitors came our way, so that it aroused quite a little excitement in our small community to hear that the Government of Madagascar—a curious mixture in that day of power vested in the hands of a Queen, who was always expected to marry her prime minister—intended to send three delegates to Europe *via* Mauritius to protest against the proposed French protectorate. These delegates were dignified by the name of Ambassadors, and their mission was to seek the intervention of Great Britain and other European powers. We were instructed to receive them with all official courtesy, including salutes from big guns and guards of honour and so forth; the worst of all this ceremonial being that the idea became firmly impressed on their minds that England was quite prepared to take up their quarrel, or, at least, to remonstrate with France. So it was a very happy and hopeful trio of "Ambassadors" who presented themselves, with a number of attendants, including several interpreters, at Réduit one evening to go through the ordeal of a formal banquet.

I confess to a certain amount of curiosity when I heard that the ambassadors were not only as black as jet, but they were quite unused to the forms of society, and that, in fact, their only experience of the ways of English folk was gathered from Wesleyan missionaries near their chief towns. Indeed, the only English entertainment they had

ever seen was a school-feast to little native children, at which they had been onlookers, and which, as one of the interpreters informed me, had seemed to them a strange and puzzling performance.

However, when the dinner-hour arrived I beheld three fine, dignified and stately gentlemen, quite as black nevertheless as their faultless evening dress, the only false note being a massive gold watch chain, from which dangled rather an aggressive bunch of locketts and other ornaments, and with which each ambassador was decorated. Beautiful bows were exchanged, and nothing could be more correct than the fashion in which the senior dignitary offered me his arm. With an interpreter on my left hand we got on famously all through dinner, with absolutely no mistakes in essentials, though I often observed some anxiety in the interpreter's face. I suppose he felt responsible for their manners. But the false hopes were there all the time, and I felt myself to be quite a cruel monster when I had to whisper to the interpreter to explain to his black Excellency, that it was only the usual custom for the Governor to propose after the toast of our own Queen the health of the sovereign of any foreign guests at table. Poor ambassadors! they thought this commonplace courtesy meant a public announcement of England's intention of ranging herself on their side of the question at issue. One did not realise at

the time what a deadly importance they attached to all these trifles, nor would we perhaps have wondered at it so much had we known that they felt their own lives depended on the success of the mission. They considered it a most hopeful sign when I asked them after dinner to write their names in my little birthday-book ; and most astonishing names they were, each name occupying three lines, but all apparently forming one syllable ! They seemed quite familiar with a pen, and each letter was beautifully formed, only they were all joined together.

There is an excellent and most comfortable rule in the Colonial Service which forbids a Governor to receive any gifts. I suppose it would also apply to a Governor's wife if the said gifts were of any intrinsic value ; but I did not see my way to wounding the feelings of my poor guests that evening by sheltering myself behind official etiquette when they tendered a hideous little glass biscuit-box and a sort of native quilt (spoiled by vivid aniline dyes) for my acceptance. Yet I had terrible misgivings all the time that they thought they were securing my interest and co-operation in their affairs, and I even edged in a word or two in my thanks through the interpreter to imply that acceptance of their gifts must be taken "without prejudice." I do not believe, however, that he had the heart to pass my remark on, for the

ambassadors beamed joyously on me and the rest of the company all the time.

I heard afterwards that they had made desperate efforts at all the European Courts, beginning with that of St. James's to secure intervention, and that it was impossible to make them understand that no one was able or willing to take up their quarrel. So in the fulness of time, their money being all spent, they had to return to their own land, where failure meant death, which I believe they welcomed rather than the new order of things.

## VII

### GENERAL CHARLES GORDON

I FEEL as if no sketch, however slight, of my short stay in beautiful Mauritius would be complete without a reference to General Gordon. Soon after our own arrival Colonel Charles Gordon came in command of the small body of Royal Engineers stationed there. From the very first his delightful personality made itself felt, and although I suspect that very few of the island-dwellers had the least idea of what a name to conjure with "Chinese Gordon" was, still he at once assumed that amazing sway over men's hearts of which he possessed the secret. Looking back on it through all these years I think the wonderful humility of the man is the first thing one realises. He took up his duties and his position in that obscure little corner of the Empire with just as much interest and simplicity as though he had never led armies to victory or changed the fate of nations. I am proud to say we saw a great deal of him, though it had to be on his own terms and in his own way. Of course, he was asked to the large and formal entertainments

at Réduit, but he always excused himself, and only came to dine with us when we were quite alone. He would change into the mess uniform, which it was the custom always to wear at Government House, ~~in~~ the carriage which brought him up, and he once gave this as an excuse for the extreme crookedness of his black neck-tie.

On these occasions, which I am happy to say were very frequent, the dinner had to be of the most simple character and compressed into the shortest possible space. I do not remember whether he took wine or not, but he consumed an immense amount of black coffee, not at dinner, but directly after, when we adjourned to the verandah and cigarettes were lighted. Every half-hour a servant brought a fresh cup of fragrant coffee, and noiselessly put it on the little table at Colonel Gordon's elbow, and this went on for hours! It is impossible to convey in words any idea of the singular charm of Gordon's conversation. With so appreciative and sympathetic a listener as my dear husband was, he gave of his best and that was very good. Not in the least egotistical, his vivid narratives were the most thrillingly interesting it has ever been my good fortune to listen to. Every word he said, for all its picturesqueness, bore the stamp of reality, and the scenes he described at once stood out before your eyes. A question now and then was all that was needed to sustain the

delightful flow of talk. He never uttered a word which could be called "cant," nor did he bring his religious opinions into prominence. One gathered from his utterances that he was more deeply imbued with the "enthusiasm of humanity" than with any dogma.

His eyes were the most remarkable part of his face, and I cannot imagine any one who has ever seen them forgetting their wonderful beauty. It was not merely that they were of a crystal clearness and as blue as a summer sky, but the expression was different to that of any other human eye I have ever seen. In the first place, instead of the trained, conventional glance with which we habitually regard each other and which, certainly at first, tells you nothing whatever of your new acquaintance's character or inner nature, Gordon's beautiful, noble soul looked straight at you, directly from out of these clear eyes. They revealed him at once, as he was, and I am sure the secret of his extraordinary and almost instantaneous influence over his fellow-creatures lay in that glance. There was a sort of wistful tenderness in it for all its penetration, an extraordinary magnetic sympathy, and yet you felt its authority. The rest of his face was rugged, and, I suppose, what would be called plain, but one never thought of anything beyond the soul shining out of those wonderful windows. To look at any other

face after his was like looking at a lifeless mask. A few months after he arrived the General commanding the troops in Mauritius left, and Colonel Gordon was promoted and succeeded him. He had been very active among the Chinese mercantile class (a very numerous one) and had done much good, not merely of a missionary but of a social nature, explaining the duties of citizenship to them, and enforcing local laws and rules which they probably had not understood. That part of the community became much easier to manage after he took them in hand.

But there was a strangely unpractical side to General Gordon's nature, apart from his utter disregard of what might be called his own interests. Those he never thought of for one moment, and I honestly believe that his feelings about the value or importance of money—as money—were on a par with the ideas of a nice child of five years old ! Coins of the realm remained but a short time in his pocket, and were only welcome to him as a means of helping others. Still his charity was not at all indiscriminate, and in the numerous instances of which I knew his help was always judiciously given.

Curiously enough, the scheme of defence for Mauritius, which General Gordon was requested officially to draw up, was found to be absolutely impossible. He bestowed much pains and care



on it, but his plans involved many alterations and changes not one of which were found practicable. I have in my possession some charming letters of his to my husband, who had written privately to the General to state that in forwarding this scheme of defence to the War Office, he, as Lieutenant-Governor, had felt obliged to disagree entirely with it, and to point out the utter impossibility on every ground of carrying it out. Now my husband was one of General Gordon's warmest and most discriminating admirers, and he showed me the private correspondence on the subject as illustrating the noble and beautiful nature of the man. There was not the slightest trace of annoyance or even pique at the unpromising terms in which a civilian Governor had felt it his duty to differ from so eminent a military authority. The General just recognised that it was a plain expression of an honest opinion and respected it accordingly, nor was there the slightest friction between them nor the least check upon their friendly intercourse.

I remember particularly one merry evening in the verandah after dinner, when the General had just returned from an official visit to the Seychelles, a little group of islands nearly 1000 miles from Mauritius, but in those days one of its *dépendences*. He was full of a brand new theory, based on the coco-de-mer, a gigantic palm which he saw for the

first time, and which convinced him that he had discovered the site of the Garden of Eden. He explained with great eagerness how he felt sure of the existence of the four encircling rivers of that favoured spot (only they now ran underground), but his strong point was the strange weird fruit which hung, some eighty feet or so above the ground, from those splendid palms which are peculiar to the Seychelles group. In vain the Governor pointed out, with much laughter, that our first parents must have been of a goodly height to reach this fruit, and in the next, that it was not good to eat!

The dear General bore all our chaff with the sweetest good-humour, but remained as firmly fixed as ever in his idea. He was most eager and earnest about it all, and, though he found our laughter infectious and joined heartily in it, nothing made the least impression on him, and I believe he always thought the Garden of Eden had once united that little group of islets in one exquisite whole—for Mahé is certainly a lovely spot and as fertile as it is fair.

We always felt we could not expect to keep him long with us in Mauritius though he never chafed nor repined in any way, and just did his duty from day to day, and whatever other work for his fellow-men his hand found to do, with all his might. But all too soon he was summoned home, and quite the next thing we heard of him was that he was going

out to India with the new Governor-General, Lord Ripon, as his Private Secretary. We all exclaimed at once, "Think of the dinner-parties!" and were not at all surprised to hear how short a time that arrangement had lasted, though the dreaded form of entertainment had really nothing whatever to do with Gordon's resignation of his post long before India was reached. From time to time he wrote to my husband, and we followed every step of his subsequent career with the deepest interest. I have since heard, I do not know with what truth, that it was a mistake in a telegram which prevented his going to the Congo on King Leopold's business instead of to Egypt on ours. However that may be, the rest of the story was quite in harmony with what one had known of him, but of all those who sorrowed for his tragic fate—and it was a nation that grieved—no one lamented him more than his official chief of the Mauritian days.

## VIII

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Few people can realise how rapid is the growth of a colony when once it begins to grow. Like a young tree, after reaching a certain stage, it may seem to have almost attained its limit, and one often feels disappointed that more visible progress has not been made. But come again a little later, and you will find your sapling shooting rapidly up into a splendid tree. It was really growing, as it were, *under* ground; searching with its roots for the most favourable conditions. Perhaps there was a piece of rock to be got round before the good soil could be reached, but the little tree was covering that rock all the time with a network of roots so that it ceased to be an obstacle and was gathered up and assimilated with its growth. In the decade between 1880 and 1890 Western Australia was just in that stage, and the splendid young giant of to-day must have been growing underground then, though it did not seem to be making much progress as a colony. In those days we sadly called our-

selves "Cinderella," but the Fairy Prince—Responsible Government—was not far off, and I am proud to remember that my dear husband, then Governor of the colony, was one of those who helped to open the door and let Prince Charming in.

They tell me the colony is quite different now, and that Perth is unrecognisable. I try to be glad to hear it, and keep repeating to myself that the revenue of a month now is what we thought good for a year, fifteen years ago. But no one can be more than happy, and I question very much if the rich people there to-day are any happier or even better off, in the true sense of the words, than we were. Of course, enormous progress has been made, and many of the works and wants which we only dreamed of and longed for, have suddenly become accomplished facts. Our Cinderella's shoes have turned out to be made of gold, but they pinch her now and then, and have to be eased here and there. Still they are, no doubt, true fairy shoes, and will grow conveniently with the growth of her feet.

In our day—which began in May 1883—the colony was as quiet and primitive as possible, but none the less delightful and essentially homelike. I must confess that one of its greatest attractions in my eyes was what more youthful and enterprising spirits used to call the dulness of Perth. But it never was really dull. To me their always

appeared to be what I see American newspapers describe as "happenings" going on.

For instance, one morning I was called into the Governor's office to look at a tin collar just sent up from the port of Freemantle for the Governor's inspection. It appeared that the two little children of a respectable tradesman in Freemantle had that morning been playing on a lonely part of the beach, and had observed a large strange bird, half floating, half borne in by the incoming tide. It was a very flat bit of shore just there, and the sea was as smooth as glass, so the boy—bold and brave, as colonial boys are—fearing to lose the curious creature, waded in a little way, and, seizing it by the tip of the outstretched wing, dragged it safely to land. There, after a few convulsive movements and struggles, the poor bird died, and the little ones wisely set off at once to fetch their father to look at what they thought was an enormous seagull. When Mr. — arrived at the spot, he at once saw that the bird was an albatross, and furthermore that a large fish was sticking in its throat. A closer inspection revealed that a sort of tin collar round the neck, large enough to allow of its feeding under ordinary circumstances, but not wide enough to let so big a fish pass down its gullet, had strangled it. The collar had evidently formed part of a preserved meat tin of rather a large size, with the top and bottom knocked

out, and around it were these words, punched quite distinctly in the tin, probably by the point of a nail :—

*“Treize naufragés sont réfugiés sur les Iles Crozets, ce”*—then followed a date of about twelve days before. *“Au secours, pour l’amour de Dieu !”*

In those days everything used to be referred to the Governor, so Mr. — at once went to the police station, got an Inspector to come and look at the bird, hear the children’s story, take the collar off—a work of some difficulty, in fact the head had to be cut off—and bring it up by next train to Perth.

It was an intensely interesting story, and aroused all our sympathy. A telegram was at once sent off to the Admiral commanding on the Australian station, telling the tale, and asking for help to be sent to the Crozets ; but the swiftly returned answer stated, with great regret, that it was impossible to do this, and that the Cape Squadron was the one to communicate with. Now unfortunately this was impossible in those days, so another message was despatched directly to the Minister for Marine Affairs in Paris, and next day we heard that the Department had discovered—through an apparently admirable system of ship registry—that a small vessel had sailed from Bordeaux some months before and that the way to her destined port would certainly take her past the Iles Crozets. No news of

her arrival at that port had ever been received, so a message was even then on its way to the nearest French naval station ordering immediate relief to be sent to the Crozets. This reply, most courteously worded, added that there were *caches* of food on these islands, which statement was borne out by the fresh look of the tin collar. A curious confirmation of the story was elicited by the volunteered statement of the captain of a newly-arrived sailing wool-ship, who said that in a certain latitude, which turned out to be within quite measurable distance of the Crozets, an albatross had suddenly appeared in the wake of the ship, feeding greedily on the scraps and refuse thrown overboard, and the crew observed with surprise that the bird followed them right into the open roadstead which then represented Freemantle harbour. The date coincided exactly with the figures on the tin. The bird must have found the collar inconvenient for fishing, and had joined the ship to feed on these softer scraps, until, with the conclusion of the little vessel's voyage, the supplies also ceased.

Stories should always end well, but alas! this one does not. We heard nothing more for several weeks, and then came an official document, full of gratitude for the prompt action taken, but stating that when the French gunboat reached the Crozets it was found quite deserted. A similar tin, with the same sort of punched letters on it, had been



left behind saying that the contents of the *cache* had all been used, and that, supplies being exhausted, the *naufragés* were going to attempt to construct some sort of a raft on which to try to reach another of the islets where a fresh supply of food might possibly be found hidden. This message had briefly added that the poor shipwrecked sailors were literally starving.

The most diligent and careful search failed, however, to discover the slightest trace of the unfortunate men or their raft. Probably they were already so weak and exhausted when they started that they could not navigate their cumbrous craft in the broken water and currents between the Islands. We felt very sad at this tragic end to the wonderful message brought by the albatross, and only wished we had possessed any sort of steamer which could have been despatched that same day to the Iles Crozets.

Another morning—and such a beautiful morning too!—F. looked in at the drawing-room window, and asked if I would like to come with him to the Central Telegraph Office—a very little way off—and hear the first messages over a line stretching many hundreds of miles away to the far Northwest of the colony. Of course, I was only too delighted, especially as I had “assisted” at the driving in of the very first pole of that same telegraph line two or three years before

at Geraldton, some three hundred miles up the coast.

I was much amazed at the wonderful familiarity of the operator with his machine. How he seemed hardly to pause in what he was himself saying, to remark, "They are very pleased to hear your Excellency is here, and wish me to say," and then would come a message glibly disentangled from a rapid succession of incoherent little clicks and taps. Presently came a longer and more consecutive series of pecks and clicks, to which the operator condescended to listen carefully, and even to jot down a pencilled word now and then. This turned out to be a communication from the sergeant of police in charge of the little group of white men up in that distant spot, where no European foot had ever trodden before, to the effect that he had lately come across a native tribe who had an English-woman with them. The sergeant went on to say that this woman had been wrecked twenty years before, somewhere on that North-west coast, and that she and her baby-boy—the only survivors of the disaster—had ever since lived with this tribe. She could still speak English, and had told the sergeant that these natives had always treated her with the utmost kindness, and had in fact regarded her as a supernatural and sacred guest. Her son was, of course, a grown-up man by this time, and had quite thrown in his lot with the tribe. She

declared she had enjoyed excellent health all those years, and had never suffered from anything worse than tender feet. She hastened to add that whenever her feet became sore from travelling barefoot, the tribe halted until they had healed.

Naturally, we were deeply thrilled by this unexpected romance clicked out in such a commonplace way, and the Governor at once authorised the sergeant—all by telegraph—to tell the poor exile that, if she chose, she and her son should be brought down to Perth at once, cared for, and sent to any place she wished, free of all expense.

Of course we had to wait a few moments whilst the sergeant explained this message, though he had wisely taken the precaution of getting the tribe to "come in" to the little station as soon as he knew the line would be open. I spent the interval in making plans for the poor soul's reception and comfort, promising myself to do all I could to make up to her for those years of wandering about with savages. But my schemes vanished into thin air as soon as the clicks began again, for the woman steadily refused to leave the friendly tribe—who, I may mention, were listening, the sergeant said, with the most breathless anxiety for her decision. She declared that nothing would induce her son to come away, and that she had not the least desire to do so either. The Governor tried hard, in his own kind and eloquent words, to persuade her to

accept his offer, or, failing that, to say what she would like done for her own comfort, and to reward the tribe who had been so hospitable and good to her. She would accept nothing for herself, but hesitatingly asked for more blankets and a little extra flour and "baccy" for the tribe. This was promised willingly, and some tea was to be added.

My contribution to the conversation was to demand a personal description of the woman from the sergeant, but I cannot say that I gathered much idea of her appearance from his halting and somewhat laboured word-portrait. Apparently she was not beautiful; no wonder, poor soul!—tanned as to skin, and bleached as to hair, by exposure to weather. Only her blue eyes and differing features showed her English origin. She had kept no count of time, nothing but the boy's growth told that many years must have passed.

"They look upon her as a sort of Queen," the sergeant declared, "and don't want her to leave them." It was very tantalising, and I felt quite injured and hurt at the collapse of all my plans for restoring such an involuntary prodigal daughter to her relatives.

I fear I became rather troublesome after this episode, and got into a way of continually demanding if there were nothing else interesting going on up in that distant region; but, except the sad and too frequent report of interrupted communication,

which was nearly always found to mean a burned-down telegraph pole, there was nothing more heard of the tribe or its guest whilst we remained in the colony. But these burned telegraph poles held a tragedy of their own ; for they were always caused by a fire lighted at their base as the very last resource of a starved and dying traveller to attract attention. I fear I was just as grieved when, as sometimes happened, it turned out to be a convict, who was making a desperate and fruitless effort to escape, as when it was an explorer who perished. The routine followed was that, as soon as the line became interrupted, two workmen with tools and two native police officers would set out from the hut, one of each going along the line in opposite directions until the " fault " was found. As the huts or stations were at least a hundred and fifty miles apart, and the dry burning desert heat made travelling slow work, this was often an affair of days, and I was assured that the relieving party never yet found the unhappy traveller alive. All this is now quite a thing of the dark and distant ages, for a railway probably now runs over those very same sand plains, and no doubt Pullman cars will be a luxury of the near future.

I wonder, however, if the natives of those North-west districts still contrive, from time to time, to possess themselves of the insulators, which they fashion with their flint tools into admirable spear-

heads. Also if they have at all grasped the meaning of those same telegraph poles. In the days I speak of, they considered the white man "too much fool-um," as the kangaroos could easily get under this high fence, which was supposed to have been put up to keep them from trespassing!

It must have been towards the end of 1889 that men began to hope the statement of an eminent geologist, made years before, was going to prove true, and that "the root of the great gold-bearing tree would be found in Western Australia." Reports of gold, more or less wild, came in from distant quarters, and although it was most desirable to help and encourage explorers, there was great danger of anything like a "rush" towards those arid and waterless districts from which the best and most reliable news came.

One of the many "gold" stories which reached us just then amused me much at the time, though doubtless it has settled into being regarded as a very old joke by now. Still it is none the less true.

A man came in to a very outlying and distant station with a small nugget, which he said he had picked up, thinking it was a stone, to throw at a crow, and finding it unusually heavy, examined it, and lo! it was pure gold. Naturally there was great excitement at this news, and the official in charge of the district rushed to the telegraph office

and wired to the head of his department, some five hundred miles away in Perth: "Man here picked up stone to throw at crow." He thought this would tell the whole story, but apparently it did not, for the answer returned was: "And what became of the crow?"

Diggers used to go up the coast, as far as they could, in the small mail steamers, and then strike across the desert, often on foot, pushing their tools and food before them in a wheelbarrow. Naturally, they could neither travel far nor fast in this fashion, and there was always the water difficulty to be dealt with. Still a man will do and bear a great deal when golden nuggets dangle before his eyes, and some sturdy bushmen actually did manage to reach the outskirts of the great gold region. The worst of it was that under these circumstances no one could remain long, even if he struck gold; for there was no food to be had except what they took with them. As is generally the case in everything, one did not hear much of the failures; but every now and then a lucky man with a few ounces of gold in his possession found his way back to Perth. Nearly all who returned brought fragments of quartz to be assayed, and every day the hope grew which has since been so abundantly justified.

It happened now and then that a little party of diggers who had been helped to make a start would ask to see me before they set out, not wanting any-

thing except to say good-bye, and to receive my good wishes for their success. Poor fellows! I often asked about them, but could seldom trace their career after a short while. Once I received, months after one of those farewell visits, a little packet of tiny gold nuggets, about an ounce in all, wrapped in very dirty newspaper, with a few words to say they were the first my poor friends had found. I could not even make out how the package had reached me, and although I tried to get a letter of thanks returned to the sender, I very much doubt if he ever received it.

However, one day a message came out to me from the Governor's office to say H. E. had been hearing a very interesting story, and would I like to hear it too? Nothing would please me better, and in a few minutes the teller of the story was standing in my morning room, with a large and heavy lump, looking like a dirty stone, held out for my inspection. I wish I could give the whole story in his own simple and picturesque words, but alas! I cannot remember them all accurately. Too many waves and storms of sorrow have gone over my head since those bright and happy days, and time and tears have dimmed many details. However, I distinctly remember having been much struck by the grave simplicity of my visitor's manner, and I also noticed that, although it was one of our scorching summer days, with a hot wind blowing,



he was arrayed in a brand-new suit of thick cloth, which he could well have worn at the North Pole ! He seemed quite awed by his good fortune, and continually said how undeserved it was. But I suppose this must have been his modesty, for he certainly appeared to have gone through his fair share of hardships. He had been one of what the diggers called " the barrow men," and had held on almost too long after his scanty supplies had run short.

The little party to which he belonged had been singularly unfortunate ; for, although they found here and there a promise of gold, nothing payable had been struck. At last the end came. This man had reached the very last of his resources without finding a speck of gold, and although men in such extremity are always kind and helpful to each other, he could not expect any one to share such fast dwindling stores with him. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to turn back on the morrow, whilst a mouthful of food was still left, and to retrace his steps, as best he might, to the nearest port. He dwelt, with a good deal of rough pathos, on the despair of that last day's fruitless work which left him too weak and exhausted to carry his heavy tools back to the spot they called " camp." So he just flung them down, and as he said " staggered " over the two or three miles of scrub-covered desert, guided by the smoke of the camp-

fire. Next morning early, after a great deal of sleep and very little food, he braced himself up to go back and fetch his tools, though he carefully explained that he would not have taken the trouble to do this if he had not felt that his pick and barrow were about his only possessions, and might fetch the price of a meal or two when it came to the last.

I have often wondered since if the impression of the Divine mercy and goodness, which was so strong in that man's mind just then, has ever worn off. He dwelt with self-accusing horror on how he had railed at his luck, at Fate, at everything, as he stumbled back that hot morning over his tracks of the day before. The way seemed twice as long, for, as he said, "his heart was too heavy to carry." At last he saw his barrow and pick standing up on the flat plain a little way off, and was wearily dragging on towards them, when he caught his toe against a stone deeply imbedded in the sand, and fell down. His voice sank to a sort of awestruck whisper, as if he were almost at Confession, as he said, "Well, ma'am, if you'd believe me, I cursed awful, I felt as if it was too hard altogether to bear. To think that I should go and nearly break my toe against the only stone in the district, and with all those miles to travel back. So I lay there like Job's friend and cursed God and wanted to die. After a bit I felt like a passionate child who kicks and breaks the thing which

has hurt him, and I had to beat that stone before I could be at all quiet. But it was too firm in the sand for my hands to get it up, so in my rage I set off quite briskly for the pick to break up that stone, if it took all my strength. It was pretty deep-set in the ground, I assure you, ma'am ; but at last I got it up, and here it is—solid gold and nearly as big as a baby's head. Now, ma'am, I ask you, did I deserve this ? ”

He almost banged the rather dirty-looking lump down on the table before me as he spoke, and it certainly was a wonderful sight, and a still more wonderful weight. He told me he had searched about the neighbourhood of that nugget all day, but there was not the faintest trace of any more gold. So, as he had no time to lose on account of the shortness of the food and water-supply, he just started back to the coast, which he reached quite safely, and came straight down to Perth in the first steamer. The principal bank had advanced him £800 on his nugget, but it would probably prove to be worth twice as much. I asked him what he was going to do, and was rather sorry to hear that he intended to go back to England at once, and set up a shop or a farm—I forget which—among his own people. Of course, it was not for me to dissuade him, but I felt it was a pity to lose such a good sort of man out of the colony, for he was not spending his money in

champagne and card-playing, as all the very few successful gold-finders did in those first early days. I believe the purchase of that one suit of winter clothing in which to come and see the Governor had been his only extravagance.

That was the delightful part of those patriarchal times—only fifteen or twenty years ago, remember—that all the joys and sorrows used to find their way to Government House. I always tried to divide the work, telling our dear colonial friends that when they were prosperous and happy they were the Governor's business, but when they were sick or sorrowful or in trouble they belonged to my department ; and thus we both found plenty to do, and were able to get very much inside, as it were, the lives of those among whom our lot was cast for more than seven busy, happy years.

## IX

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA—*Continued*

THERE had never been a bushranger in Western Australia before Bill (I forget his "outside" name) appeared on the scene, and I don't suppose there will ever be another. If any one may be said to have drifted—indeed, almost to have been forced—by circumstances into a path of crime and peril, it was this same unlucky Bill. Until his troubles came he was always regarded as rather a fine specimen of a colonial youth. Tall, strong, and good-looking, apt at all manly sports and exercises, he was adored by the extremely respectable family to which he belonged, and who brought him up as well as they could. For Master Bill must always have been a difficult youth to manage, and from his tenderest years had invariably been a law unto himself.

At school he had formed a strong friendship with another lad of his own age, who was exactly opposite to him in character, tastes, and pursuits, but nevertheless they were inseparable "mates," and all Bill's people hoped that the influence of

this very quiet, sedate youth would in time tame Bill's wild and lawless nature. As the boys grew into their teens it became a question of choosing a career, and the quiet boy always said he wanted to get into the police. That was his great ambition, and a more promising recruit could not be desired. It came out afterwards that when the lads discussed this subject the embryo policeman often observed : " If you don't look out, Bill, and alter your ways, I'll be always having to arrest you." Bill laughed this suggestion to scorn, not that he had any intention of amending his ways, but he could not believe that any one who knew his great physical strength and utter recklessness would dare to lay a hand on him. The ways he was advised to amend consisted chiefly in worrying the neighbours, with whom he lived in constant feud and Border warfare. No old lady's cat within a radius of five miles was safe from him, and he chased the goats and harried the poultry, and generally made himself a first-class nuisance all round.

The strange thing was that, in spite of this strong instinct of tormenting, Bill was universally acknowledged to be a splendid " bushman "—that is, one familiar with all the signs and common objects of the forests. He would have made an ideal explorer, and could have lived in the Bush in plenty and comfort under conditions in which any one else would have starved or died of thirst. It seemed

odd to find in the same youth this passionate love of Nature and familiarity with her every wild bird or beast, and a certain amount of cruelty and callousness.

Time passed on, and one of the boys at least got his heart's desire and was enrolled in the very fine police force of Freemantle. Bill could not be induced to settle to any profession, though his knowledge of bush-craft and his superb powers of endurance would have insured him plenty of well-paid employment as an explorer or pioneer in the unknown parts which were just beginning to be opened up in our day, for the first faint whispers of the magic word "gold" were being brought to the ears of the Government.

Just about this time one of the neighbours imported a special breed of fowls, which Bill forthwith proceeded to torment in his leisure moments. The owner of the unhappy poultry bore Bill's worrying with patience and good nature for some little time, but at last assured him that he would take out a summons against him if he persisted in harrying his sitting hens. Bill's answer to this was buying a revolver and announcing that he would certainly shoot any one who attempted to arrest him. Of course, no one believed this threat, and in due time the summons was taken out, and the task of making the arrest devolved upon his friend and school-mate, who warned him privately that he would

certainly do his duty and that he need not hope to escape. Bill fled a few miles off and kept out of the way for a little while. No one wanted to be hard on the youth for the sake of his very respectable family, and a good deal of sympathy was expressed for them ; also, every one hoped and believed that this little fracas would sober Master Bill down, and that he might yet become a valuable member of the community.

However, one Sunday evening, just at dusk, Bill was hanging about the poultry yard with evil intent, when he suddenly perceived his friend in uniform and on duty the other side of a low hedge. The owner of the fowls had asked for a constable to watch his place, and, as ill luck would have it, Bill's friend was sent. The two boys looked at each other for a moment across the hedge, and then the policeman said :—

“ Now, Bill, you had better come along quietly with me ; there's a warrant out against you, and I've got to take you to the police station.”

“ If you come one step nearer, I'll shoot you dead,” answered Bill.

“ That's all nonsense, you know,” the poor young constable replied, and began pushing the hedge aside to get through it. Bill drew his revolver and shot the friend and playmate of his whole life dead on the spot. He then rushed back to his own place, and, hastily collecting some food and cartridges,



was off and away into the heart of the nearest "bush" or forest, the fringe of which almost touched even the principal towns in those days.

It is hardly possible to imagine the state of excitement into which this crime threw the primitive little community. Murders were comparatively rare, and I was told that they were almost always committed by old "lags," men who had begun as convicts perhaps thirty-five or forty years before, and had generally only been let out a short time before on a ticket-of-leave. But this catastrophe was quite a fresh departure, and called forth almost as much sympathy for the relatives of the wretched Bill as for those of his victim. The native trackers set to work at once and picked up Bill's trail without any difficulty, but the thing was to catch him. No Will-o'-the-wisp could have been more elusive, and he led the best trackers and the most wary constables a regular dance over hills and valleys, through dense bush and scrub-covered sand, day after day. News would come of the police being hot on his tracks thirty miles off, and that same night a store in Freemantle would be broken into, and two or three of its best guns, with suitable cartridges, would be missing. As time went on the various larders in Perth were visited in the same unexpected manner, and emptied of their contents. Bill never took anything except ammunition, food, and tobacco, but whenever the police came up with

his camping-ground—often to find the fire still smouldering—they always found several newspapers of the latest dates giving particulars of where he was supposed to be.

In the course of the many weeks—nine I think—that this chase went on, the police often got near enough to be shot at. One poor constable was badly wounded in the throat, so that he could never speak above a whisper again, and another was shot dead. But Bill was never to be seen. Sometimes they came on his “billy” or pannikin of tea, standing by the fire, and another time he must just have flung away his pipe lest its smell should betray him. One is lost in amazement at his powers of endurance, for he could have had no actual sleep all that weary while. The general plan of campaign was to keep him always moving, so as to tire him out. What strength must he have possessed to do without sleep all that time, and to cover such fabulous distances day after day. The police themselves, or rather their horses, and even the trackers, got quite knocked up, in spite of a regularly organised system of relief; so what must it have been for the hunted boy, who could never have had any rest at all?

It was the year of the first Jubilee, and numerous loyal festivities were taking place during all the time of Bill’s chase. Of course, June is the Antipodean midwinter, and cold and wet had to be reckoned with, as well as very bad going for both

horse and man, and great fatigue for the pursuers. Bill apparently thought the Jubilee ought in some way to do him good, and he used to stick notices up on trees with his terms fully set forth. One proposition was that he should be let off entirely because of the Jubilee. Another notice stated that he would give himself up to *me*, if he was guaranteed a free pardon. The grim silence with which all these tempting offers were received must have exasperated the young ruffian, for after a time these bulletins breathed nothing but melodramatic threats of vengeance, especially against the Governor, and he began to attempt to carry them out in many ways.

But the wickedest idea to my mind was the plan he evidently formed of wrecking the special trains which were to convey almost all the Perth people down to Freemantle, some thirteen miles away, in the middle of the Jubilee week. The citizens of the Port were determined to show themselves every bit as loyal and exultant as we were in Perth, and had bidden the Governor and the officials, as well as the rest of the little society, to a fine ball at their grand new Town Hall. The railway authorities and the police were quite alive to the risks we should all run; every precaution was taken, and especially not a whisper was allowed to creep out as to Mr. Bill's murderous intentions. A pilot engine went first

the night of the ball, and the best native trackers were "laid on" the line. Next morning's daylight showed how much all this vigilance and care had been needed, for in numerous places Bill's footsteps could be tracked down to the rails, and large branches of trees, rocks, and other handy impediments lay within a foot of the line, and he must have been hunted off when quite close many times during that cold wet night. I believe I was the only woman in the long special train who knew of Mr. Bill's intentions, and I confess I found it somewhat difficult to conceal a tendency to pre-occupation and to start at slight sounds. However, it would have quite spoiled the Freemantle ball if the least breath of the risk to the guests from Perth had got abroad, so all the men bore themselves as Englishmen do—quietly and serenely—and I had to hide my nervousness for very shame's sake. Especially when we were coming back, quite late, and I saw how tired and sleepy every one was, the thought would cross my mind of wonder if the poor watchers on the outside were as tired as we were, and so, perhaps, not quite so much on the alert. My private fears proved groundless, happily, but I can never forget the relief of finding myself (and my far dearer self) safe in our beautiful home again that night. I had felt so wretched at the ball when I looked at my numerous pet girl friends dancing blithely away,

and thought of the dangers which might easily beset their homeward road.

By this time every one, especially those whose larders had been raided, took the keenest interest in Master Bill's capture, and the local papers were full of his hairbreadth escapes. I remember a paragraph which interested me very much stated that once, when, "from information received," the police had drawn quite a *cordon* round his lair and were creeping stealthily towards it, a bird suddenly uttered a piercing shrill note; and one of the trackers, learned in bush-lore, remarked that their chance of catching him then was gone, for that bird would have warned him, as it never uttered its cry except when it saw a stranger suddenly. I may mention here that I never rested until I heard that bird's note myself, and I spent the next summer in organising bush picnics, and then wandering away as far as I dared in order to alarm the bird by a sudden appearance. At last one day, when I had very nearly succeeded in losing myself in the bush, a sudden shrill note terrified me out of my life. If the bird was frightened so was I, for it was a most piercing cry.

At last the end came; at earliest dawn one morning Bill, resting on a log in the bush without even a fire to betray him, opened his eyes to the sound of a command to "put up his hands," and saw half-a-dozen carbines levelled straight at him

a few yards off. He showed fight to the last, and managed before holding up his hands to fire a shot at the approaching constables, wounding one of them in the leg. The men rushed in, however, and he was soon overcome and handcuffed and brought into Perth. But the most curious part of the story lies in the universal sympathy and, indeed, admiration immediately shown by the whole of our very peaceable and orderly little community for this youth. Of course, the officials did not share this strange sentimentality, for they regarded Master Bill and his exploits from a very different point of view, and I used really to feel quite angry, especially with my female friends, who often asked me if I was not "very sorry" for the culprit? My sympathies, I confessed, were more with the families of his victims, especially the poor policeman with his mangled throat, whom I had often seen in my weekly visits to the hospital. When I expressed surprise at the interest all the girls in the place took in the young ruffian, the answer always was: "Oh, but he is so brave." It appeared to me the bravery lay with his captors!

He was duly tried, but the jury did not convict him of premeditated murder, and in face of the verdict he could only be sentenced to imprisonment for some years. Master Bill's captivity did not last very long on that occasion, for he watched his

opportunity, sprang upon the warder one day knocking him senseless, scrambled over the wall of the exercise ground, near which chanced to be a pile of stones for breaking, and so got away. Then the pendulum of Public Opinion—that strange and unreliable factor in human affairs—swung to the other side, and a violent outcry arose, and Bill's immediate death was the least of its demands. He was caught without much difficulty that time, however, and it was curious to find no one taking the least interest in his second trial, which resulted in a lengthy and rigorous imprisonment. Poor wretch! I believe even I ended by being "sorry" for him and his wasted life, with all its splendid possibilities.

Another tragedy was enacted in the North-west not long after Bill's adventures had ended; and yet, terrible as this incident was, one could hardly help an ill-regulated smile.

I wonder how many people realise that Western Australia holds a million square miles within its borders. True, most of it is, as Anthony Trollope said, only fit to run through an hour-glass, being of the sandiest sort of sand. But then, again, all that that sand requires to make it "blossom like a rose" is water. Given an abundant supply of water, and all those miles of desert will grow anything. You have only got to see the sand-plains as they are called, *before* the winter rains and *after*

them. These sand-plains are just a sort of tongue or strip of the great Sahara in the middle of the Island Continent which runs down—some seventy miles wide—towards the sea-shore three or four hundred miles to the north-west of Perth.

The rumours of gold which had begun to fill the air during our day, necessitated first, telegraph stations, and then the establishment of outlying posts of civilisation; the nucleus of what are already turned or turning into flourishing towns. I have always declared that when there were three white men in any of these distant spots, the first thing they started was a race-meeting, with a Governor's Cup or Purse (value about £5), and then next would come a Rifle Association, with a Literary Institute to follow, to all of which H.E. would be invited to subscribe. However, the outlying settlement I speak of had not attained to these luxuries, for it consisted of only one white man. He combined the offices of Warden and Magistrate and Doctor, and several other duties as well; but he must have led a truly Robinson Crusoe sort of life, poor man. I should mention that these settlements had always to be close to the sea-shore in order to keep in touch, by means of the little coasting steamers, with a base of supply. This gentleman—for he was a man of unblemished character as well as of education and refinement—had not a creature to speak to beyond a few half-



tamed natives, except when the steamer touched—once a month, I believe—at his little port. He was a splendid shot and a keen sportsman, but there was not much scope for his “gunning” talents, and sea-gull shooting formed one of his few amusements.

One fine evening he was lazily floating in a light canoe about the bay, with a native to paddle, whilst he looked out for a difficult shot, when the man suddenly pointed to an object on a rock some fifty yards from the shore which he announced was a “big-fellow” gull. It did look rather large for a gull, but the sportsman thought it might be some other sort of strange sea-bird, and, after carefully adjusting the sight of the rifle and taking most accurate aim, he fired. To his horror the crouching object gave a sort of upward leap and then fell flat. Poor Mr. ——— seized the oar and paddled with all speed to the spot, to find a white man lying dead with his bullet through his heart.

One can hardly realise the dismay of the involuntary murderer, for anything so unexpected as the presence of any human being in that lonely spot with darkness coming on, and a difficult path, from rock to rock, to be retraced to the shore, cannot be imagined. There was nothing for it but to take the body into the boat and return home. The most careful inquiries carried on for months failed to elicit the slightest information as to that lonely victim's identity. He had not a

mark of any sort on his clothing, nor a scrap of paper about him, which could throw the least light on his name or history. No one knew that another white man was in the district at all. If he had dropped from the sky on to that rock he could not have been more untraceable. It was all tragic enough, but what made me smile in the midst of my horror at the details of the story—of which I first saw the outline in a local newspaper—was to hear that Mr. — had sat as coroner on the body, also fulfilled the duties of the jury, then became police magistrate, and finally brought himself down to Perth as the author of the “misadventure.” Of course, there was no question of a trial, for it was the purest and most unlucky accident, regretted by Mr. — more than by any one else. No advertisements or amount of publicity given to the story ever threw the least light on the poor man’s name or antecedents. Of course, here and there letters came from individuals who thought they saw their way to *exploiter* the Government and extract some sort of money compensation for the death of their hastily adopted relative, but as their story invariably broke down at the very outset—in which case they generally lowered their demands by next post from £1000 to 10s.—no ray of light was ever thrown on the mystery of how that white man came to be sitting quietly on those rocks at sunset that evening.

I fear these two stories have been rather of what an Irish servant of mine once called "a blood-curling" nature, so I must end with a less tragic note.

During one of the many war scares in which we have indulged any time these twenty years, a couple of her Majesty's gunboats were watching the Australian coast, or rather watching any suspicious craft in those waters. As is often the case along that coast, they had met with dreadful weather, and had been buffeted about and their progress greatly delayed, so by the date the harbour I speak of was reached ample time had elapsed for war to be declared, and it had seemed imminent enough a week before, when the ships had left their last port of call. Now this great bay held a sort of inner harbour which would have been very convenient to an enemy for coaling, and where in fact large stores of coal were kept on board hulks. So it was quite on the cards that if war had broken out during those few blank days, the enemy might have made a pounce for the coal, more especially as in those days the harbour was absolutely undefended. Now, I am told, it bristles with big guns !

It was late of a full-moon night when these vessels crept quietly into the outer harbour. All looked peaceful enough, and the lamp in the lighthouse shone out as usual. It did not take long to decide that a small armed party had better

pay a surprise visit to that lighthouse and learn what had taken place during the last week or so in its neighbourhood. The young officer who told me the story described most amusingly the precautions taken to avoid any noise, and to surround the lighthouse whilst he and some others went in to see what was to be found inside. Only one solitary man met them, however, who stood up and saluted stolidly, but offered no shadow of resistance, and all seemed *en règle*. The next thing, naturally, was to question this lighthouse-keeper, but to every demand he only shook his head. The stock of foreign languages which had accompanied that expedition was but small, however, and a shake of the head was the only answer to the same questions repeated in French and German. It was therefore decided to take the silent man back to the gunboat (leaving a couple of men in charge of the light), and see whether, as my informant said, they could "raise any other lingo" on board. But by the time the ship was reached the doctor and not the schoolmaster was required, for the poor man was found to be in an epileptic fit. Daylight brought a little shore-boat alongside with his wife in it, who gave them all a very disagreeable quarter of an hour, for the lighthouse-keeper was deaf and dumb, and could not imagine what crime he had committed to be taken prisoner in that summary fashion. He knew nothing of wars or

rumours of wars, but tended his lamps carefully, and his wife had been allowed, under the circumstances, to share his solitude. She had only left him for a few hours, and when she returned at earliest dawn, and found her husband gone and a couple of sailors in charge of the lighthouse, it did not take her long to rush down the hill, get into her boat, and so on board H.M.S. —. I believe she expected to find her spouse loaded with irons, and on the eve of execution, instead of being comfortably asleep in a bunk, with a good breakfast awaiting him.

When the story was finished I remarked to the teller : “ Quite an illustration of Talleyrand’s ‘*Sur-tout, point de zèle,*’ isn’t it ? ” And the young officer shook his head sadly, as much as to say that it was indeed a wicked world. I fancy that “ wiggings ” had followed.

## X

### THE ENROLLED GUARD

THE wheel of Time brought round many changes during our eight years stay in Western Australia, all making for progress and improvement. Under the latter head the disbandment of the old Enrolled Guard must be classed ; but it was really a sad day for the poor old veterans, and the Governor determined to try and make the parting as little painful as possible. So, on the thirty-first anniversary of the battle of Alma, he invited all the non-commissioned officers and men to a mid-day dinner at Government House in Perth. Our best efforts could only collect fifty-three, and many of these were very decrepit, poor old dears. They were nearly all that were left of the soldiers who had been brought out to guard the convicts fifty years before, and who, when convicts were no longer sent out to Western Australia, were induced to remain, in what was then a very distant and unknown colony, by gifts of land and a small pension. Some were enrolled as a Guard for Government House and other public buildings, and it was the remains of this little force, gradually grown too infirm and decrepit for even their light duties, who had, on that bright spring morning, to give way to the smart up-to-date young policemen.

The step had been contemplated for some little time, and we had just returned in 1885 from a short visit to England, during which there had been an opportunity for my husband to mention the subject to his Royal Highness the late Duke of Cambridge, then Commander-in-Chief. It will not surprise those who remember the deep interest in the British soldier always shown by H.R.H. to hear that the Duke listened with great attention to all that was told him, asked many questions, and ended by saying, "Well, give them all my best wishes, and tell them how glad I was to hear about them." It is needless to say that these kind and gracious words formed the text as it were of the little parting address made by the Governor after the parade which preceded the dinner, and it was touching to see how gratified the veterans were. In spite of the old habits of discipline which they were all doing their very best to remember and act upon, there was a movement and a murmur all down the ranks, and I strongly suspect there was something very like a tear.

It was, indeed, a pathetic sight, as all *last* things must always be, to see these old men in their quaint, antiquated uniforms, shouldering their obsolete rifles, and to realise this was the very last time they would ever stand in rank as soldiers. On every breast gleamed medals, and there were two Victoria Crosses. Men stood there who had fought both in the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny, as well as

in China, Burmah and New Zealand, and now it was all over and done with, and they would never step out to the dear old familiar tunes any more.

Still we did our best to keep up their spirits, and not to allow the occasion to become at all a mournful one. Both the Governor and their own Commandant said kind and cheering words to them, and they were soon marching off to the big ball-room which had been given as military a character as possible.

If I had at all realised what the united ages of my guests would have amounted to, I think I should have had all the roast beef and turkey passed through a mincing-machine, for I soon foresaw difficulties in that way. We, *i.e.* my large band of girl-friends and I, waited on them, and the gentlemen carved. It was difficult to get the men to choose what they wanted to eat, for the general answer to their young waitresses was, "Bless your pretty heart, I'll have just whatever you likes, and thinks I can bite!"

Of course, the repast ended with the one toast of the "Health of her Majesty the Queen," with musical honours and equally, of course, it was cheered and shouted at to the echo, and one felt it was by no means a perfunctory and empty ceremony, for every man there had fought and bled for her. Then we gave them each a pipe (they called it either a "straw" or a "dhudeen" according to their nationality) and a stick of tobacco, and left



them in charge of our house steward, who gave a most amusing account afterwards of how they had at once begun to fight their battles over again, for many of them had been brought from other parts of the Colony for this occasion and had not met for a long time. Their reminiscences were somewhat grisly it seems, for Pat would relate how he had "bayoneted a nagar" in Africa or New Zealand, capped by Mike's announcement that he "took the shilling fifty years ago, served in six general engagements, was twice wounded, and three times nearly kilt." Whereas Dick would only regret that he had served twenty years, eleven months and thirty days, and claimed sympathy on the ground that if he had served "tin days more, bad luck to me if I wouldn't have had another pinny a day on me pintion." But why he did not put in that ten days extra service never seems to have come into the story.

I do not know whether, unlike his comrades, Mickey's teeth were still serviceable, but he boasted that, although he was sixty-six years old, he "hadn't a grey hair in me head, and I can run, jump or leap with 'ere a man in barracks! There boys, hurroo!" Paddy was only a soldier for two years, but he had been badly wounded at Sebastopol and spent a long time in hospital; an experience which he would not have missed for the world however, for the Queen visited him there and gave him a silk handkerchief hemmed by herself. "D'ye

hear what I say, boys ? The Queen hemmed it with her own fingers and I've got it still, and it's to be buried with me, so it is."

Then there were reminiscences of the dinner on the Alma day. "We had raw pork served out with biscuit, and divil a stick of wood to cook the meat with." The V.C. man who had ridden in the Charge of the Light Brigade could only remember a raw onion as having formed his rations on that day, but he spoke fondly of it.

If I had felt any doubts as to whether the entertainment had been a success they would have been dissipated by the question put to me whenever I came across an old Enrolled Guardsman afterwards. No matter what I spoke of he invariably brought the subject round to that dinner and ended it with, "I suppose you'd hardly be thinking of giving us another party like that, would you now, mum ?" It rather went to my heart to say I was afraid not, but I really believe it was the meeting each other and talking over old times which they had so enjoyed. That is all nearly twenty years ago, and I sadly fear there are but few of our guests of that day still alive, and when I think of how many dear ones who stood by my side that day, not old and decrepit like the soldiers, but in the full flush of youth and health and strength, have, like them, gone into the Silent Land, I wonder at my own courage in writing at all of those happy days.

## XI

### TRINIDAD

TRINIDAD had nearly completed its first century of British rule when we went there in 1891, for it was in February 1797 that the British Fleet, eighteen vessels in all, under Admiral Harvey came through the Bocas, carrying a land force of nearly 8000 men under General Sir Ralph Abercromby. The Spanish Governor, Chacon, felt that no defence was possible, for he only had at his command a small, passing squadron of five ships and about 700 soldiers. So, with an amount of practical common-sense and humanity which might be borne in mind with advantage at the Hague Conference, he surrendered to the tremendous odds brought against him. Not a single life was lost in this change of flags; but the Spanish Admiral, Apodoca, burned his ships sooner than give them up. Chacon seems to have been an excellent Governor, and to have done much for his colony before he had to yield to *force majeure*. Indeed, it always struck me in looking over the history of Trinidad that it had been exceptionally fortunate

in its Governors. Colonel Thomas Picton was its first English proconsul, and though, as might be expected, somewhat high-handed and hasty in his dealings, especially with the natives, the colony made great progress under his rule; but it only lasted six years, which was considered a short time to manage the affairs of a colony in those days. It is a fact, however, that when Sir Thomas Picton fell at Waterloo, he was practically under trial for the alleged murder of two slaves in Trinidad. The case was only standing over for further evidence. Certainly, things—justice among other things—seem to have been done in a loose and free-and-easy way in the early days of the last century!

The Governor *par excellence* of Trinidad, however, is, and always will be, Sir Ralph Woodford, although Lord Harris and Sir Arthur Gordon run him very close in enduring popularity of the best sort. But Sir Ralph was truly a born empire-maker. He was so young, too—only twenty-nine—when he began (in 1813) his fifteen years of hard work in a tropical climate. It must have been extremely difficult to change the whole state of affairs, even the language—for it was not until his day that English was used in the Law Courts and that the minutes of the “Cabildo”—the precursor of our Legislative Council—were kept in the new tongue. Poor Sir Ralph died at sea on his way to England in 1828, and it is sad to

think how completely his valuable life seems to have been thus early sacrificed to the ignorance of the commonest rules of health. But he would not leave his work in time, and so died in harness very shortly after he had been persuaded to leave his beautiful and beloved colony.

Lord Harris did not take up the reins of government until 1846, only eight years after slavery had been abolished, so he had to deal with as complex a state of affairs as Picton or Woodford. But he ruled splendidly and successfully until 1854, and it was delightful to hear, nearly half a century afterwards, how well the numerous reforms and systems he had started still worked.

All this time the various Governors had dwelt in many and different Government Houses, all more or less near the site of the present one. Don José Maria Chacon, captain in the Spanish Navy, and his predecessors seem to have lived on the side of a neighbouring hill, but it is difficult to trace even the foundations of that house, for when once "the jungle is let in" it soon covers up and does away with bricks and mortar. Then came a strange and ugly little dwelling where the pastures of the Government farm now spread, and that was succeeded by a house of sorts (of which I could find no pictured record) in the Botanical Gardens. That must have been near where the present beautiful dwelling stands, for whenever I said what a pity

it was that the stables should be so near the house, I was always told that they were a survival of a former Government House in the same spot. But the jungle also seemed to have been let in on the minds of my informants, for I never could elicit any accurate information about that house. Sir Ralph Woodford lived in a large Government House in Port of Spain, used as Government Offices and burned in the late riots, but the really historical Government House in Trinidad will always be the Government Cottage about a quarter of a mile away, still in the Botanical Gardens, where Sir Arthur Gordon lived and Kingsley wrote his "At Last." Nothing now remains of what must have been a picturesque and romantically pretty little dwelling but the swimming-bath and an outbuilding used as a cottage for the house carpenter. But I often used to go and look up the valley with "At Last" in my hand, and try to identify the trees described. The ravine or dell immortalised by Kingsley has, however, suffered many changes from the woodman's axe and forest fires, for the only tree I could ever recognise is the big Saman outside the ballroom windows.

*A propos* of the existing building, "I call this a tropical palace," was the remark made to me several times a day by one of our numerous—shall I say globe-trotting?—guests, who certainly ought to have been a judge of palaces. And there was

some truth in the criticism as applied to the present Government House at Trinidad. Because the popular idea of a palace is that it is not a very comfortable dwelling, and chiefly constructed with a view to first impressions. This "palace," however, is really a beautiful house, and stands in the large Botanical Gardens of Port of Spain. It has a charming view over the wide savannah in front, and is sheltered from the cold north winds by the low, beautifully wooded hills behind. The natives say of this same wind, which is so alluringly fresh and cool, "*vent de nord, vent de mort*," and the chill it brings to the unwary, especially at night, is doubtless accountable for many of the local colds and fevers. Nothing can be much more beautiful than the first effect of the entrance hall to this Government House, and the long vista through the large saloon and ballroom beyond ends with a glimpse of that magnificent Saman tree on whose wide-spreading branches grows what Kingsley so aptly calls—speaking of this same tree—"an air-garden."

To my mind that tree was quite one of the sights of those beautiful gardens. Beneath it flourishes a small grove of nutmeg-trees, and tall, spreading palms, all of which seem mere shrubs and bushes compared to its lofty splendour. When it is loaded with its pink feathery blossoms, it attracts every bird and insect in the island, but our winter visitors

never really saw that tree in its full beauty, for the wondrous air-garden growth did not develop until after the first heavy rains. Then it is indeed wonderful to see the sudden spikes of brilliant blossom, the fantastic orchid growth, and the marvellous wealth of ferns clustering and drooping all along the massive branches. I endured great anxiety lest the weight of the wet verdure should break down these giant limbs, for the wood is rather soft and unsubstantial. However, no such calamity has yet occurred.

But to come back to the tropical palace. It was certainly an ideal house for entertaining. I always declared that the balls gave themselves, and there never was the slightest trouble in arranging any sort of party in the large rooms, which were always as cool as possible after sunset. The ballroom was lofty, open "to all the airts that blow," and possessed a perfect floor. Then when you have Kew Gardens for decorative purposes growing outside your windows, there is not much difficulty in producing a pretty effect. Indeed, the entire house was arranged for coolness, from the great hall which went up the whole height of the building, to the wide verandahs which surrounded it on three sides. But in the bedroom accommodation there is a woeful falling-off, and I was often at my wits' end to know how to house the numerous guests who flock to these "Summer Isles of Eden" every winter.



There is no place in the house for English servants, and your own and your visitors' servants can only be put up in some of the guest-rooms. There is one magnificent bedroom which is called "the Prince's Room," as H.R.H. the present Prince of Wales inhabited it during his last visit, in 1891. But it is a very hot room, and if you are to coax any cool air into it you must resign yourself to keeping your doors wide open. The suite of rooms generally used by the Governor are at the end of another long corridor, and, though good, comfortable, and certainly the coolest in the house, are so close to the stables that one hears the horses stamping and fidgitting all night, especially when the vampire bats are tormenting them. The only back staircase in the house also passes close to these rooms, so they can hardly be described as quiet or private. Still, it was a very pretty house, and I took great pride and delight in hearing it admired.

It is not until one lives in a place oneself that one realises in what degree it is accessible. Certainly I never thought I should welcome many English friends coming out to Trinidad just for a little change after influenza! But that constantly happened, and beautiful yachts often looked in there for a few days, to say nothing of training ships of all nationalities. The attraction to them was the placid nature of the Gulf of Paria, which made it an ideal playground, or rather school-

room, for them, and many intricate evolutions on its smooth surface have I been invited to witness. There I beheld with interest as well as amusement the young idea being taught how to shoot torpedoes as well as to lay or find mines and other fiendish contrivances.

It always amused me, especially with the foreign vessels, to watch the degree of ardour with which the naval cadets pursued their deep-sea studies. But the most ardent and promising pupil who ever visited our shores was a young Japanese prince, who, if his proficiency of those ten-year-old days is any guide, ought certainly to have played a very distinguished part in the present struggle with Russia. Anything like that boy's thirst for knowledge and anxiety to do every other cadet's work I never beheld. He was studying at that time on board a German training ship, but he told me he hoped to go for a second course of instruction to an English one. His captain said he had never seen any cadet work so hard or so conscientiously, and his one waking thought was to make himself acquainted with every detail of his profession.

The naval cadets of every nation were always free to spend their shore leave at Government House, and play tennis or amuse themselves in the beautiful gardens in any way they liked, for the thought of my own boys made me anxious to provide a safe and pleasant play-place for them,

and it delighted me to see how much they liked coming up to us. The huge fresh-water swimming-bath in the grounds counted for a great deal in their simple amusements, as did the iced "lime-squash" afterwards. The little prince came but seldom, and if I asked after him, I was always told, "Oh, he is doing so and so's work."

One beautiful evening we were going to take tea on board this same German man-of-war, and I noticed in the launch which was sent to tow our own barge a grimy little figure working away at the miniature stoke-hole. "Who is that?" I asked. "That? oh, that's the Prince, of course. He begged to be allowed to come and stoke for you. He wanted to learn just how that furnace went."

Prince K. did not seem to know how to play tennis, nor could he dance, and I do not believe his idea of amusement extended beyond his ship's side. At his Captain's request we gave him a formal dinner-party, receiving and treating him just as we would our own royalty. Poor boy, he went through it all courageously, but it must have been a terrible infliction, for he could not speak one word of English, and even his knowledge of German was scanty. He brought two gentlemen of his suite with him, and depended on them for translation. They both spoke French as well as English tolerably well, but as far as appearance went the little Prince had decidedly the advantage,

and looked very high-bred in his plain and correct evening dress, but it was the only time I ever saw him out of uniform. He maintained a true Oriental gravity all through dinner, and it was quite a revelation of his real expression of face when the Governor, after the usual toast of the Queen's health, proposed that of the Emperor of Japan, and one of his gentlemen, whom I had taken the precaution of putting near him, told him of the terms of the toast. The lad sprang to his feet at once, and with really a beaming countenance bowed low, first to the Governor and then to the rest of the company. He looked absolutely delighted, and it did not need his Secretary's whispered comment of "His Highness ver much please" to tell me how gratified he was.

But after dinner things became terribly dull for him, poor boy. He did not dance, nor seem to care about music or anything else which was going on, so it fell to my share to walk him about the large *salon*, and show him whatever I thought might possibly interest him. Of course, his two gentlemen were in close attendance, or we should indeed have suffered conversational shipwreck. When I arrived at an enormous elephant's foot, I thought we had now certainly reached a turning-point in the tide of boredom which had evidently set in for the poor youth. But in spite of my explanation of how the big beast had fallen to my eldest

son's rifle and various exciting details of the said fall, all duly passed on by the other gentlemen, I could not see the faintest trace of interest or even of comprehension in that immovable ivory countenance. At last the Secretary murmured : "Highness not know elephant ver well." This was indeed despairing, but my eye was caught by a clumsy little ebony model of an elephant, which I seized as an object-lesson, handing it to the Secretary, and saying, "Please explain to his Highness that *this* is an elephant." The Prince murmured some words in reply which were translated to me as : "Ah, I see ! a large sort of pig."

After this I felt I must let things take their course, and I have no doubt the polite adieux which soon followed were as great a relief to the guest as they were to me.

The greatest daytime treat I could ever give my guests was to send them round the Botanical Gardens under the escort of the gifted superintendent. They always returned hot and thirsty, but with their hands full of treasures. I think a freshly-gathered nutmeg, with its camellia-green leaves and its apricot-like fruit, enlaced with the crimson network we know later as mace, procured them the greatest joy of all. Then came breathless accounts of the soap-nut with which they had washed their hands, of the ink galls with which they had written their names, of orchids growing beneath

long arcades—"Out of doors you know!"—of palms of every size and sort and description, each more lovely than its neighbour, of strange *lianes* which, dropping down from lofty trees and swinging in the breeze, are caught and twisted by Nature's charming caprice into the most fantastic shapes imaginable.

There are many advantages connected with the Government House standing in these beautiful gardens, but it cannot be said to conduce to its privacy. I always pined for "three acres and a cow" to myself, but I never got it! A tiny iron fence, six inches from the ground, marked out the tennis-courts, and certain narrow limits beyond, which were supposed to be private, and little iron notice-plates repeated the idea. But if any enterprising tourist wished to enlarge his sphere of observation, none of these trifles stood in his or her way, and I have sometimes been awakened at daylight by vociferous demands, just outside my bedroom window, to know "where the electric eel lived." Poor thing, it did not live anywhere latterly, for it had died; but there was no persuading the energetic visitor, who only had a couple of hours in which to "do" the Botanical Gardens, that I had not secreted it in my bathroom.

I must hasten to add, however, that it was only the tourist who sometimes harried us, for it seemed well understood by the people of the island that a

certain small space round Government House was private ground, and we never had the least difficulty with even the numerous nurses and babies who flocked, for whatever fresh air was going, to these charming gardens where the capital police band plays twice a week. We often strolled about this public part of the gardens on Sunday afternoons, when many people were about, and I enjoyed it thoroughly, until it came to the final "God save the Queen," and then I confess I always felt surprised and indignant to see how few hats were taken off. Every white man, from the Governor downwards, stood bare-headed of course, from the first note to the last, so did the ever-courteous foreign visitor; but hardly a well-clad, well-fed young coloured man followed their example. I was always deeply ashamed at visitors seeing this lack of loyalty or manners (I don't know which). I observed the elder black men nearly always uncovered, but the dark, gilded youth of Port of Spain certainly did not.

One does not realise how close Trinidad is to Venezuela until one goes there. My very first drive showed me a fine mountain range blending beautifully with the fair and extensive landscape.

"I thought there were no really high mountains in Trinidad!" I exclaimed in surprise.

"But those are not in Trinidad," was the crush-

ing answer ; " they are on the mainland, which is only twenty miles off, just there."

I little thought, that day, how anxiously I should watch the political horizon of Venezuela ! But as the supply of beef depended on the numerous revolutions or threatenings of revolutions, I grew to take the liveliest interest in those social convulsions, and I became an ardent advocate of peace at almost any price—of beef.

I always longed yet never made time, I am sorry to say, to go up one of the numerous mouths of the Orinoco which run into *our* Gulf, the Gulf of Paria ; many of our guests made the excursion, getting up as far as Bolivar in one of the comfortable, almost flat-bottomed river steamers which provide an excellent service. The accounts brought back were always so glowing that I longed to go, but home duties and home ties pinned me firmly down.

Venezuela seems to be a perfect land of Goshen compared to even our tropical luxuriance, and the cocoa-pods, bananas, and plantains brought back from the mainland were, without the least exaggeration, quite twice as large as those grown on the island. " But, then, what would you have ? " I was asked. " Trinidad is only a little bit of South America which the Orinoco has washed off from the mainland." If this be so, then the mighty stream dropped several of the pieces on the way, for there are many islets, some five miles or more away from



Trinidad, and towards the Bocas or mouths of the great river. These little islands are a great feature of Trinidad, and splendid places for change of air or excursions. They all have houses on them, and one tiny islet may, I think, claim to be the smallest spot of earth which holds a dwelling. It is just a rock, on the top of which is perched a small but comfortable and compact house. Beyond its outer wall is, on one side, a minute plateau about ten or twelve feet in length, and that is all the exercise-ground on the island. I was assured it was the favourite honeymoon resort, which certainly seemed putting the capabilities of companionship of the newly-married couple to a rather severe test! Fishing, boating, and bathing are the resources at the command of the islet visitors, and the air is wonderfully fresh and cool on these little fragments of the earth's surface. Whenever I could make time it was my great delight to take the Government launch with tea and a party of young friends to one of these islets, and it was certainly a delightful way of spending a hot afternoon.

Trinidad is a great place for cricket, and boasts a beautiful ground belonging to a private club. First-class teams often go out there to play matches, and I used to see incessant cricket practice going on on the savannah in front of Government House. Certainly that savannah is a splendid "lung" to the low-lying town, and the people of Trinidad

may well be proud of it. On its south-western side is a small walled enclosure ; it is the graveyard of the original Spanish owners of the soil, and a large sugar estate once stood where races are run and cricket played nowadays. The living owners have all, long ago, disappeared ; only the dead remain in their peaceful little resting-place under the shade of the spreading trees which grow inside the low wall.

To return for a moment to the Botanical Gardens. Within the limits of the so-called private part is a small plot of ground planted with vegetables for the Governor's use. In my eyes it was chiefly remarkable for the three large, coarse sort of bean-vines which grew at its entrance, and which were further decorated at the top of the stick round which they clung (in very tipsy fashion) by an empty bottle and some tufts of shabby feathers. These aids to horticulture being quite new to me, I inquired their use, and was assured they constituted the Obeah police of the garden, and that so long as those vines grew there, no young lettuce or tomato or yam would be stolen from that garden ; and certainly theft was never assigned as the reason for the scanty contents of the gardener's daily basket. It was always the time of year or the weather.

I used to feel very envious when some of the older residents would speak of these gardens as having

been the home of the humming-bird. Alas! the lovely little creatures are seldom to be seen there now, in spite of the protective legislation of many years past. But the ruthless tourist will always buy a humming-bird's nest, especially with its two sugar-plum-like eggs in it, so the enterprising black boy keeps a sharp look-out for these articles of commerce. Soon after we first went there, I found a wee nest on a low branch of a tree close to Government House, with a darling little bird sitting in it. I peeped cautiously very often during the next few days, and the young mother grew so accustomed to my visits that she would let me stand within a yard of the bough. At last some microscopic fragments of eggshell appeared on the moss beneath, and on my next visit, when the little hen was away getting food, I beheld a thing very like a bee with a beak. This object seemed to grow amazingly every few hours, so that in a week it looked quite like a respectable bird. Imagine my rage and despair when I found one morning the branch broken off and the baby bird dead on the ground. My sweet little nest had been taken for the sake of the sixpence it would fetch next time a tourist-laden yacht came in!

A much happier fate attended a humming-bird which built its nest in a small palm growing in a friend's drawing-room. I paid many visits to that drawing-room during the bird's occupancy, and any-

thing so interesting as its manners and customs cannot be imagined. Instead of bringing material from outside for the nest, the tiny builder requisitioned the floss silk from an embroidered cushion and the wool from a ball-fringe. The nest, unusually gay in colour, hung down a couple of inches from one of the serrated points of the palm leaf; but when I was first invited to come and look on, it was not quite completed to the feathered lady's satisfaction, for she still darted in and out of the open windows and about the room.

The master of the house, at my request, seated himself in his usual arm-chair and opened his newspaper, and I made myself as small as I could in a distant corner. Our patience was soon rewarded, for there was the little bird balancing itself with its vibrating wings just above the newspaper. However, as no building material was forthcoming from that source, she flashed over to my corner, and, quicker than the eye could follow, had snatched a thread of silk from a work-table and was off to her work again. The little creature got quite tame, and her confidence was well placed, for nothing could exceed the charming kindness of her host and hostess. The eggs were laid and hatched in due time, and the master of the house told me he used to get up at the day-dawn and open his drawing-room window to let the little mother out to get food for her babies. This necessitated his remaining

the rest of the morning in the drawing-room, as he said it would not have been safe to have left it. I naturally thought he feared for the safety of his wife's pretty things, but oh, no—what he guarded was the nest, lest it should meet the fate of mine and be stolen.

It was on this occasion I found out what humming-birds feed on. The popular idea is that they live on honey, and attempts have often been made to keep them in captivity on honey, or sugar and water, with the result that the poor little birds died of starvation in a day or two. The honey theory has sprung from seeing the birds darting their long bills and still longer tongues into the cups of honey-bearing flowers. What they are getting, however, is not honey, but the minute insect which is attracted and caught by the honey.

I never saw any but the commonest sort of humming-bird during my stay in Trinidad, and very few of those, and I was told that even in the high woods it was rare now to behold them. In spite of the stringent ordinance against killing *colibris*, I fear many skins are taken away every year by the tourist, especially by the scientific tourist. Never can I forget my feelings when, on bidding adieu to a delightful foreign *savant*, he informed me that he had enjoyed his trips into the interior of the island immensely, and had collected many interesting specimens of flora and fauna, in-

cluding a *hundred humming-bird skins* ! I nearly fainted with horror, but my one effort then was to prevent this dreadful boast reaching the Governor's ears, for I felt sure that international complications of a very grave character would have followed.

Pages might be written on the scientific value of the beautiful gardens which surround this tropical palace, as well as of the opportunity they afford of studying insect life. At first it is disappointing to see so few flowers in them, but in the summer the large trees are covered with blossom, and, in fact, the flowers may be said to have taken refuge up the trees from the all-devouring ants. But the serious business of the gardens is really to make experiments in the growth and cultivation of the various economic products of the island—raising seedling canes, coffee, and cocoa, and determining which variety would most successfully repay culture. It is a mistake to regard them only from the ornamental point of view, though their beauty is very striking, for they are chiefly valuable for their practical results.

## XII

### TRINIDAD—*Continued*

BESIDES the humming-birds there were many less welcome denizens of the Gardens. There were ants of every species known to even Sir John Lubbock. Parasol ants, who occasionally took a fancy to my dinner-table decorations, especially if the beautiful and brilliant *Amherstia* were used. I have often been requested to say what was to be done with long lines of myriad ants ascending by one leg of the dinner-table and descending by another, each carrying a good-sized bit of scarlet petal tossed airily over his shoulder! Anything so quaint as these processions of gay colour marching across the white cloth cannot be imagined. It was a case of "Tiger in station, please arrange," and there was just as little to be done except to give up the *Amherstia*. These ants occasionally took a fancy to the flowers on my writing-table also, but we never seriously interfered with each other. I naturally thought that the ants ate these leaves and petals, but they only chew them up and spread them out like manure

on the feeding-grounds near the nests. From this sort of cultivation a minute fungus-like growth springs, and on *that* they feed. So destructive are their operations that a functionary is specially retained in the Botanical Gardens to follow them up and discover and destroy the nests, which are generally at a very great distance from the scene of their labours, and I often watched with interest a lantern apparently creeping along the ground of a dark night.

What I really wanted to see was a raid of Hunter ants. I had read a fascinating description in a book of early days in Trinidad, of a domiciliary visit paid to the author's house in the country, which she and her children had hastily to vacate at earliest dawn, taking with them their pet birds and a kitten, which the slave-women, who warned them to "turn out sharp," declared would be devoured if left behind. The Hunter ants spent the whole of that day inside the house, clearing it of every lizard, mouse, cockroach, beetle, and such small deer. The writer describes the ants as having wings when they first appeared; but when their day of gorging was over they emerged wingless, and rested in vast dark masses in her garden. They had not touched anything except the small reptile and insect colonies, which, we must remember, were likely to flourish under the deep thatched roof of those days, long before galvanised iron



or shingles from America were known. The writer goes on to say that at dawn next day she heard strange and weird screams from numerous small sea-gulls, who, in their turn, were making an excellent breakfast off the fat Hunter ants. Such scenes as this are hardly ever to be met with in these days, for the houses are so different, and more of the high woods are cleared every year.

On these hillsides cocoa is grown very successfully by the small cultivator. I have often, during our excursions up the lovely lonely valleys within an easy drive of Port of Spain, watched the process, which seemed very primitive. The clearing appeared to entail far the most labour, in spite of as much burning as was compatible with the lush-green foliage. Banana-suckers were the first things planted round the hole which held the young cocoa plant, to shade it; next came small trees of the *madre di cocoa*, or *bois immortel*, which are indispensable to a cocoa plantation. This tree is at all stages of its growth a very straggling one, and can give but little shade. I suspect it is chiefly valuable from its draining properties, for the fact remains that cocoa steadily declines to flourish anywhere without its *madre*.

Anything so beautiful as the hills towards San Fernando in the very earliest spring when the dense woods of *bois immortel* are in full blossom cannot be imagined. At sunset the whole country-

side glows with a radiance which looks like enchantment, and the green effect of this beautiful tropic island then merges over those low hills into a vivid scarlet, melting away into the indigo shadows of the quick-falling dusk. Cocoa is a most beautiful crop, for the broad glossy leaves do not at all conceal the large brilliant pod, which grows in an independent manner, in twos and threes, right out of the stem or the thickest branches. At no time of year are the trees quite bare of pods, which are of various colours. I have often seen a pale green pod, a scarlet one, and a rich dark crimson or brilliant yellow pod growing quite happily side by side; of course they were all in different stages of ripeness, but that did not seem to matter at all, and cocoa-picking appeared always going on.

Those drives up the valleys were always delightful, and we found that different patois seemed to be spoken in places half a mile apart and with only a low ridge between. Up one valley a sort of spurious Spanish would be heard, up another Creole French, whilst a hybrid Hindustani was the language of a third cleft in the hills. We made great friends, however, with the different races, and the children always rushed out to greet us.

An especial beauty of those valleys were the fire-flies and what are locally called the fire-beetles—large hard-backed creatures with eyes like gig lamps and a third light beneath, which only shows

when they fly. My ardent desire all the time I was in Trinidad was to get a specimen of a rare fire-beetle, which is said to have a luminous proboscis. I did want that beetle dreadfully, and offered frantic rewards all up the valleys for a specimen. Needless to say I was regarded more or less as a lunatic, and the carriage was often stopped either by children waving an ordinary beetle snapping violently in its efforts to escape, or by a grinning policeman who saluted and tendered me a common fire-beetle tied up in a corner of his blue pocket-handkerchief. I once tracked with infinite pains and trouble a specimen to its owner, but, alas! it was dead and half-eaten by ants.

By the first week in January the fire-flies disappear, and are not to be seen again before the heavy May rains have fallen. Then they come forth in full beauty, and it certainly is a wonderful sight as one drives home in the short gloaming, for every blade of grass holds many tiny sparkles, winking in and out with a bewildering effect. The fire-beetles chiefly haunt the lower branches of the cocoa groves, where they look like small lamps swinging among the trees. Indeed the magnifying effect of the damp atmosphere beneath these bushes is so powerful that I often found it difficult to believe that some one carrying a lantern was not stepping down the bank towards us. I once kept some of these beetles, fed them with sugar-

cane, and sprinkled them with water every day; but they soon lost their brilliancy, and I felt it so cruel to retain them in a dark prison, that I emptied them on the *Thunbergia* outside the verandah railing. One of my prettiest girl-guests used often to wear a dagger in her hair made of these fire-beetles, ingeniously harnessed together with black thread, and they showed brilliantly amid her dark braids, even beneath the ballroom chandeliers,

Nor did any winter visitor ever see the wonderful mass and succession of flowering trees, for they do not cover themselves with sheets of brilliant blossom until after the rainy season begins. I was disappointed in the actual flowers to be found in the Gardens. Even the imported ones do not manage much of a blossom, and bulbs, &c., have to wage an incessant warfare against the all-devouring ant. It is for this reason I suspect that the flowers confine themselves to high trees, where they are safe from the ants, for they certainly make but a languid attempt to grow in the ground. In vain I steeped the seeds of my particular favourites in a strong solution of quassia. That was all very well for the actual seed, but the ants only deferred their meal until my poor little plants were a couple of inches high.

I will not dwell here on my private sentiments regarding the cockroaches, for I feel that I should pass the grounds of permissible invective if I

attempted to describe my feelings towards the creatures who devoured or defaced the bindings of all my favourite books. Nothing daunts them or keeps them away; they seem to thrive and fatten on all the destructive powders of which I used to lay in large stores for their undoing. They would take the poison and the cover of my book as well, and ask for more! How can you deal with creatures who fly in at the window and run, literally, like "greased lightning"? Their fiendish cleverness must be seen to be believed; how they will dart to a knot of exactly their own colour in the polished wooden floor, and lie still as death under your eyes!

Next to the cockroaches might be ranked as irrepressible torments the mole-cricket, who would not allow of a lawn anywhere. There were some beautiful grass tennis courts in these Botanical Gardens, costing an appalling sum to keep in tolerable order—thanks to the crickets which burrow like moles and devour like locusts and hatch out in myriads. I used often to see a small army-corps of little black boys on the tennis grounds headed by tall coolies with watering-pots of strong soapsuds which they poured on the ground. This *douche* brought the mole-cricket out of his hall door in a great hurry, to be snapped up and flung into a bucket of water by the attendant imp. But it was very difficult to keep them down, even by

these means, and the lawns had to be dug up and replanted constantly. It is impossible to keep the rapacious insect-world in order in a climate which, for certainly half the year, resembles an orchid-house watered and shut up for the night.

The Harlequin beetle is, no doubt, quite as destructive as his less gaudy brethren, but one forgives him a good deal, partly because of his brilliant beauty, and partly because his depredations are carried on chiefly underground. Then the shady places are always made glorious by large slow-moving butterflies of gorgeous colouring and quaint conceit, such as transparent round windows let in, as it were, amid their brilliant markings.

Any one who fears bats should not visit "Ière, or the home of the humming-bird" (as the Indians told Sir Walter Raleigh Trinidad was called), for all sorts and conditions of bats abound. The fruit-eating variety is greatly attracted to the Botanical Gardens by the star-apple trees growing there. I always feared lest sentence should be passed against these beautiful trees with their copper-beech-like foliage, on account of the bats, who, by the way, don't seem ever to eat the fruit where it grows, but always carry it off and devour it in another tree. The Vampire bat is a great deal bigger than the ordinary bat, but mosquito netting is quite sufficient protection in a house, and the

stables are generally guarded by galvanised wire netting, and if ordinary care is taken about not leaving stable-doors open after sundown, the horses do not suffer ; but when did a negro groom ever think of a detail of that sort ?

It was very amusing to watch the native bees going back to their hive at dusk. I don't know how they had been persuaded to take up their abode in a box fastened against the wall of the Superintendent's office in the Botanical Gardens ; but the colony was in a very flourishing condition when I was taken to view it at sundown, and it had evidently established Responsible Government. The bees themselves were small and shabby, regarded *as* bees, and did not trouble to make more honey than enough for their daily needs ; they scouted the idea of storing it, for there were lots of flowers all the year round, and no wintry weather to provide against. Their chief anxiety seemed to be to keep their hall-door shut, and they were very particular on that point. When I was watching them, the great mass of the bees had already gone into the hive, and only an occasional loiterer was to be seen creeping in at a very small hole.

"Now here comes the last bee," said my companion. "Look carefully at him." So I did, and saw that the little creature was carrying a pellet of mud nearly as big as himself. It was too big to go in at the hole, so he had to break bits

off ; but he twice picked up some of the fragments which had fallen down, and stuffed them also into the hole. Then he went in himself, and the Superintendent opened a sliding panel commanding a view of this hall-door, at which three or four bees were busily working, blocking it up with the mud pellets.

"They do that every night," I was told, "and open it the first thing in the morning." I wanted very much to know what would happen if any belated bee turned up afterwards, but the story did not say.

English bees were introduced into the island many years ago, but they have lost most of their thrifty ways, and become demoralised by the flower wealth all the year round. They also decline to be confined in hives, which I dare say they find too hot, and so they build wherever they like. An enormous colony had settled years and years before, evidently, under the flooring of one of the cool north verandahs of Government House. As long as they went in and out from outside it did not matter, but latterly they took to pervading the verandah inside and violently assaulting the passers-by. This was too much to bear often, so the house-carpenter and his assistants were set to work to prise up the boards of the verandah. They chose a cloudy day when the bees would be out, taking advantage of the comparative coolness,



but they soon found that many boards had to come up, for the comb was thickly formed everywhere. At last all the verandah floor was up, and I certainly never saw such a sight. Yards and yards of comb! Most of it black and useless, nearly all quite empty of honey (that was for fear of the ants), and hardly any bee-bread even. When the men went away to their breakfast the orioles, who must have been watching the proceedings with deep interest, came down from the *Flamboyant* outside the window, and had a sumptuous breakfast off the immature bees. There was a terrible revenge, however, when the bees returned later, and the workmen had to retreat hastily. I found upon that occasion that silver quarter-dollars made the best salve for bee-stings.

When we first went to Trinidad our evening drives often led us past fields of sugar-cane, which seemed even then fast falling out of cultivation, and long before we left—in 1896—they had been replaced by plantations of Guinea grass, which appeared to thrive extremely well, and for which there was an excellent market in and near Port of Spain. The land was evidently worn out for sugar-cane, but answered capitally for this tall grass, on which all four-footed beasts seem to thrive.

Much has been written and preached about the terrible fondness of the West Indian negro for smart clothes; but if he had not that passion—

with which surely the modern fine lady can well sympathise—it would be extremely difficult to get him or her to work. Why should he, in a climate where bodily exertion is very undesirable, and where food and shelter grow, so to speak, by the roadside?

They expend vast sums on their wedding festivities, at which the guests are expected to appear in perfectly new garments. I once offered a comely young black housemaid leave of absence to go to her brother's marriage, but she declined on the score of expense. Now I had seen this girl, a week or two before, very smartly dressed for a friend's wedding, so I said :—

“But surely you have still got that beautiful hat and frock you wore at Florinda's marriage the other day?”

Aurelia gave me a shocked glance as she answered :—

“Oh, lady, me can't wear *that*!”

“Why not?” I asked.

“All peoples very much offended if I wear same dress to their wedding; must be quite new every things.”

And nothing I could urge had the least effect in shaking her resolution not to disgrace her family by appearing in garments which had done duty before on a similar occasion. I always noticed at the cathedral that every female member of the

very large and devout coloured congregation had on her head a hat which must have cost a good deal more than my own bonnet. From a picturesque point of view the effect of the coloured women's spotlessly clean white dresses and brilliantly flowered and ribboned hats was excellent, though doubtless the political economist would have sighed. I once asked a friend where and how these smart damsels obtained their patterns, for nothing could be more correct or up-to-date than their skirts and their sleeves.

"Oh, the washerwomen set the fashions here, especially yours. It is very simple: when you send a blouse or a muslin or cotton dress to the wash—and these women wash beautifully—the laundress calls in her friends and neighbours, and they carefully study and copy that garment before you see it again; and the same thing happens with the gentlemen's tennis flannels, and other garments."

But the most amusing, and absolutely true, story I heard was this one:—

Our house steward told me that, when he was superintending the moving of our numerous boxes and packages on the return from our short annual visit to England, he noticed on the wharf one of the young black men employed who was unusually active in dealing with the luggage. Nothing could be a greater contrast to the ordinary sleepy loafer, who used to smoke and talk a good deal more than

he worked. This youth was strong and smiling, and made nothing of handling any big boxes which came in his way, so most travellers rewarded his good-humoured exertions by an extra sixpence for himself.

A couple of years later Mark was missing from the landing jetty. No one knew what had become of him, nor could the most anxious inquiries elicit any information. At last one day, when my informant was in one of the principal "Stores," as the excellent and comprehensive shops of Port of Spain are called, there suddenly entered his friend Mark, smiling as ever, and still dressed in his primitive working garments of three old sacks—two for his "divided skirts," and one with a hole cut in it for his head to go through, and worn as a sleeveless smock-frock. Before any questions could be asked, Mark took one of the assistants aside, and began to choose, very carefully and deliberately, an entire outfit of black cloth clothes. He evidently knew exactly what he wanted, and paid for each article, as he selected it, from a roll of five-dollar notes, which, for want of a pocket, he carried in his hand. The broad-cloth suit was followed by other indispensable garments, and finally a pair of lavender gloves, shining boots, a tall hat, a slender umbrella, and even a showy gilt watch-chain were purchased, and the happy possessor of a complete rig-out of "Europe clothes" left the

store with only a few cents to put in his new and numerous pockets. He was often seen afterwards in this fine suit of clothes walking about the Gardens when the band was playing, but, so far as any one knows, he has never done a stroke of work since !

### XIII

#### RODRIGUES

“THE deaf, cold official Ear” used to be a favourite phrase in the Crown Colonies in my day, and referred, of course, to the Ear of Downing Street; but even then it seemed to me a very undeserved reproach, for, so far as my own experience went, or rather the experience of my dear husband, it was only necessary to bring a grievance—small or large—before that much-abused department for at least an attempt to be made to remedy it directly.

Take the case of Rodrigues as an example. It had been for many years a “most distressful” *dependance* of Mauritius. Once upon a time—early in the nineteenth century—it was a favourite sanatorium of the East Indian squadron, and ships were constantly calling there to leave sick or wounded sailors and take away the convalescents. For, until 1814 brought peace and the Treaty of Paris, a good deal of fighting went on in that part of the Indian Ocean, Bourbon and L’Ile de France being the prizes of the victor.

Apropos of those same prizes, I have always heard that L'Ile de France, as Mauritius used to be called in those days, was only captured by stratagem, and that its protecting circle of reefs, quite as effectual as a chain of torpedoes, had kept the British frigates cruising outside for many a weary day. There was no reliable chart, and, naturally, no pilot was forthcoming. At last, *very* early one morning, a pirogue was sighted, and a smart man-of-war's boat intercepted it before the shelter of the coral girdle could be gained. Its solitary occupant was a young fisherman, who was directly taken to the admiral's ship, and, with great difficulty and with the aid of what was to him an enormous bribe, persuaded to guide the landing-party's boats through difficult passages to a suitable and unexpected landing-place. The choice lay between that and death, and the lad chose life and wealth. But I was assured that from that day to this the poor man and his descendants had been regarded as outcasts, with whom no one in the conquered island would have any dealings.

Then, as to Bourbon, the story goes that it was given back to the French by that same Treaty of Paris owing to a mistaken idea at our own Colonial Office that it was a West Indian island, instead of lying only a hundred miles south of Mauritius. So ever since 1814 poor little Rodrigues has been deserted by her naval visitors, and Port

Mathurin had welcomed only two men-of-war in the sixty-five years which had passed before our visit.

The real bad times, however, set in with the abolition of slavery, for it is the sort of climate where one need not work, or only work very little, to live. The sugar and coffee estates soon fell out of cultivation, as did the cotton and even the vanilla bean, which grows so easily, and the island seems to have come in for more than its fair share of hurricanes. Then the want of communication and a market for exports completed the tale of its trouble; and when an unusually dry season killed the rice crops, something very like a famine set in. This had happened several times before our day, and relief for the moment had, of course, been sent.

But when, one day in the middle of the hurricane season of 1881, a wretched little open boat struggled across the 350 miles of Indian Ocean, bringing the island pilot and another sailor with a piteous tale sent by the magistrate in charge, of the hunger and distress which prevailed in Rodrigues, the Lieutenant-Governor of Mauritius felt that nothing but a personal visit and inquiry into the cause of the constantly recurring evil would satisfy his Government. So an application was made at once through the Colonial Office for the loan of a man-of-war to visit the afflicted little island. There was no telegraph nearer than Aden twenty-three years ago, so, although the matter



was taken in hand at once in Downing Street, it was early in June of the same year before it could be finally arranged. A small gunboat was all that had been asked for, and lo! the flagship herself—the stately *Euryalus*—was put at the Lieutenant-Governor's disposal through the courtesy of the admiral of the East Indian station, who made an official visit of his own to Madagascar fit in with the date of the proposed trip to Rodrigues.

I have felt this little explanation to be necessary of how we came to be standing on the poop of H.M.S. *Euryalus* that lovely afternoon of June—the best mid-winter month. Our party had been kept as small as possible, for there was only the accommodation reserved for the admiral and his flag-lieutenant vacant, and our good bishop had begged to come to look after the spiritual needs of his small flock in that distant part of his diocese.

The scene is still vividly before me; the profound calm of everything after the noise and bustle of our reception on board were over, of which the only trace was the smoke of the saluting cannon still curling over the calm water. *We* seemed to be stationary, and the lovely hills, with their deep purple shadows, their glistening waterfalls, and the vivid green of the fields of sugar-cane in the valleys, appeared to be slowly gliding away under the most exquisite sunset sky. But all too soon the *Euryalus* had made her way through the

crowded harbour of Port Louis to what seemed a gate in the wall of coral reef, and headed, a few moments later, out to sea. A sea beautiful to behold, indeed, but of so rough-and-tumble a nature that the dinner-party that evening was but small. In fact few of our party showed up much during the three days of alternate rolling and pitching across that rough bit of water, with a strong head-wind from south-east. We had really been making the best of our way all the time because the captain was very anxious to get in early on the 28th to celebrate her Majesty's coronation. No sooner, therefore, had we dropped anchor in the open roadstead opposite Port Mathurin than the royal standard flew out from our main, and the gallant old ship was, in a moment, dressed from stern to bow in gay flags. At noon a royal salute pealed out over the water—but this is anticipating a little, for long before noon every available boat was crowding round the *Euryalus*. The magistrate had come on board directly; so had two very agreeable Roman Catholic priests. Every one concerned in the matter was soon deep in the arrangement of details connected with our official landing.

As I had nothing to do except to put on my best bonnet at the proper time, I had plenty of leisure to admire the tiny island, which, with no other land to dwarf it, looked quite imposing from the deck of the *Euryalus*. It was difficult to believe

that the highest hill I could see was only 1800 feet above the sea-level, for the beautiful clear atmosphere seemed to magnify everything, as if one were looking at it through water. And there were ravines plainly marked, each with its little tumbling cascade, and a great deal of bright green foreground, which we afterwards found was not the inevitable sugar-cane, but a coarse, rather rank grass, affording excellent grazing for cattle. Indeed, Rodrigues could supply Mauritius entirely with beef if only there were proper communication, but as matters then stood our supply used to come chiefly from Madagascar by weekly steamer.

It was really like an English April day, even to the bite in the air whenever the sun was absent during the constant scudding squalls—squalls which kept the poor reception committee in a state of anguish and anxiety not to be described. Most of them had come on board to arrange details, and were condemned to watch their beautiful arches and masts and flags being most roughly handled by the sou'-wester. I did my best to comfort any one who came my way by predictions of a fine afternoon, and to assure them that business—stern, serious business—was the real object of the visit. The heart-breaking part of it all, however, was to find that the entire population of Rodrigues insisted on regarding the gaily-dressed ship, the royal salute, even the royal standard, as all being

part and parcel of the show, and in the Lieutenant-Governor's honour. I never can forget the horrified faces both of poor dear F. and the flag-captain of the *Euryalus* when this fact dawned on them. They were quite tragic over it, and thought me most heartless for laughing at the mistake.

The alternations of sun and shower showed up with curious clearness the water-path which a boat would need to follow between the ship and the shore. It was traced quite distinctly, as if in a very devious track of indigo, through the bright blue water and the white tips breaking on the coral reefs, whilst every here and there a wee islet, on which earth and grass-seed were quickly finding their way, had pushed its head up. It seemed an object-lesson on the very beginning of things. The worst of all this was that the big ship could not come at all near the shore, and, as we were always to sleep on board, the little voyage twice a day entailed a good deal of forethought on account of the tide.

However, both weather and tide were highly favourable by three o'clock that same afternoon, when the official landing took place with perfect success. I could not help glancing triumphantly at the now radiant reception committee as, with hardly a breath of air stirring and not a cloud in the sky, we stepped out of the admiral's barge. Needless to say, the entire population of Rodrigues

were crowded on the little wharf, which was gaily carpeted with red and roofed with palm branches. Even the two *condamnés*, representing the evil-doers of the community, stood in the background in friendly converse with their gaoler, who would not on any account miss the show. Our friend the pilot was there also in great form, and it seemed he had been taking to himself the credit of having arranged the visit. He was not in carpet slippers this time, however, which was a pity; for, if he had only known it, the carpet slippers in which he had been forced to present himself before the Lieutenant-Governor, after his terrible voyage in February, had, as he called it, *abîmé* his feet, and, adding a certain dramatic touch of reality to the tale of suffering—counted for something in the end.

A resplendent guard of honour of Marines had preceded us, and so had the ship's band. "Ces Messieurs avec les trompettes" became at once first favourites, and remained so to the end. Primitive and friendly as it all was, there yet was no escaping the inevitable addresses, which had to be in French, as that is really the language of the little island, though I fear it was not of the purest Parisian type. Happily, I could perceive no traces of famine or even of hard times in the crowds which surrounded us. All seemed fat, and buxom, and beaming. I looked anxiously at the children, for I remember the heart-breaking sight the poor little ones had

presented when I had passed through an Indian famine district long years before the Rodrigues visit. These babies were as plump as ortolans, and as merry as crickets.

Friendly and almost universal handshaking brought the affair to an end—"une vraie fête de famille," as I heard it called—and we were free to adjourn to the magistrate's pretty house for a welcome cup of tea. The moment it had been hastily swallowed and F. had got out of his gold-laced coat, he and the magistrate adjourned to the little court-house close by and plunged at once into business, being with difficulty hailed forth in time to return on board for a very late dinner. Nothing had any effect on their movements except threats of the falling tide. In fact, the state of the tide governed—not to say tyrannised over—our arrangements that whole week. "Pray be punctual to-morrow morning, on account of the tide," was the last thing I heard at night, and no engagement on shore could be made until the state of the water at a given hour was ascertained. In spite, however, of punctuality and care, we had to make some ridiculous *trajets*, beginning in great pomp in the admiral's barge, changing half-way into smaller boats, then into canoes, and finally being piloted through the shallows standing on a tiny plank laid across a stout leaf and propelled by a swimmer; yet one always arrived dry-shod though much agitated.

We had only a very few days to stay in Rodrigues, for the *Euryalus* had to return to Madagascar to pick up her admiral; but there were two things which must absolutely be accomplished during our visit. One was an expedition to "The Mountain" to visit the good priests and make a closer acquaintance with the needs of that particular district, and the other was to have a day's sport. This, I must add, was chiefly in the interests of our kind naval hosts, for I honestly believe that both F. and the magistrate would have greatly preferred a long and happy day in the court-house, hard at work.

The mountain excursion entailed our leaving the ship at eight o'clock of a lovely morning. In fact, the bad weather seemed to have ceased with our landing, and it proved ideally calm and beautiful all that week. As no wheeled vehicle, or horse to draw it, exists on Rodrigues, *chaises à porteurs* were provided for the two ladies of the party, and all the gentlemen walked. For the first five miles the road was excellent, having, indeed, been a "relief work" during one of the famines. It zigzagged up the steep hill-sides very easily, and wound through natural groves of oranges and lemons, plantains and palms, which afforded a welcome shade. The small houses—*cases*, as they are called—looked trim and pretty, each with its "provision ground" of yams and sweet potatoes,

and one soon got high enough to look over them on to the little town nestling among trees, with large patches of bright green grass between it and the sea. The *Euryalus* made a stately object in the foreground, and dwarfed the little fishing-boats and pirogues which swarmed around her to the size of toys. I noticed that the sails of these tiny craft were stained with much the same vivid colours one sees at Chioggia, and the colouring of both sky and sea was truly Italian, as were the "soft airs of Paradise," which made walking a pleasure.

Still, many halts were called, ostensibly to admire the charming panorama, but also to pick wild oranges and other juicy fruits. Flowers, more or less wild, grew in profusion all round us, and I was soon laden with beautiful blossoms.

We were already a large party when we started, and our enormous "tail" increased as we passed through each hamlet. The last part of the road proved merely a mountain track over rough boulders, and all felt glad when the hill-top was reached and we were once more on a tolerably level track. The village of Gabrielle appeared to have availed itself of every inch of cover from the summer hurricanes, and each ravine or dip in the ground was occupied by a little *case* and garden. A fine triumphal arch awaited us here, beneath which stood the two abbés, with the



whole population of the district as a background. Such a smiling crowd, and such a cordial welcome !

After the inevitable address, an attempt was made to raise " le God-save " (as it is always called in Mauritius), but its tones were wavering and uncertain, and the tune showed a tendency to turn into the " Old Hundredth," so it was somewhat of a relief when it was succeeded by a local hymn of welcome, which they all knew, and which was given with great heartiness and lung power. The refrain " Et vivat ! et vivat ! " was most spirited, and went really well.

By this time, however, we all felt very hungry, and were glad to be taken to the presbytery, close to the little chapel, where *déjeuner* awaited us. Wild kid, poultry, eggs, and fruit made up an excellent meal, followed by perfect coffee ; and then the serious business of the day began.

I betook myself to the sheltered side of a *case*, where I could view the sort of open-air meeting which was going on to leeward of the chapel, and of which F. and the priests formed the central figures. An interpreter had to be found, for the island has a patois of its own, different even from that of Mauritius. This interpreter was an Irishman, and his gestures were so dramatic that I could really make a good guess at the story which was being unfolded ; but I felt somewhat puzzled when, towards the end, he flung his old hat on

the ground and danced on it. I wondered if he was asking for Home Rule! All the men in the settlement had crowded round F. and the priests, so I found myself the centre of a large gathering of the women of Gabrielle. Children were there in numbers, but had no chance of getting near me, and there was always the difficulty of the language. What my smiling jet-black friends seemed most curious about was my "civil status," and that of the other lady. "Madame ou Ma'amzelle?" was the incessant question to both of us. I singled out one extraordinarily ugly but beaming and big, fat girl to put the same question to, and I can never forget the droll air of coquetry with which she laid one black finger against an equally black cheek, turned her head aside, and murmured bashfully, "Moi, je suis Modeste."

This out-of-door parliament lasted a couple of hours, and by that time all the burning questions and even the grievances had been laid before the Lieutenant-Governor, and it was necessary to make a start if we were to catch the tyrant tide. So the procession re-formed, only with the *chaises à porteurs* left out, for we ladies preferred to walk down, especially at first; and off we set, the priests leading, our little party next, and a dense crowd everywhere. They all sang hymns, winding up with the first we had heard, and lusty shouts of "Et vivat! et vivat!" pursued us almost to the

bottom of the hill. Never was a more affectionate leave-taking, and the expressions of gratitude to F. for the trouble he had taken were really most touching. We carried the dear abbés back to dine on board with us, as there was yet much to be discussed.

The next day was supposed to be one of rest as far as exercise went, and whilst F. was busy indoors with work, I was taken by the magistrate's wife round the little town of Port Mathurin to visit the school and the tiny hospital, as well as to return the calls of some of the leading ladies. It is a very healthy island apparently, much more so than Mauritius, but then it is not so desperately overcrowded as its big sister. The chief complaint I heard was of the idleness and inertia of the people themselves, and of how difficult it was to induce them to do anything except dawdle—good-humouredly enough—through their lives. Of course, this partly accounts for the famine and distress. They just live from day to day, and make no sort of provision for even the morrow, still less the rainy or hurricane day.

There certainly was no inertia, however, on the part of the children at a christening service the bishop held in the schoolroom that afternoon. Such vigorous protests against the sacred rite could not be imagined, and it was difficult to get through it on account of the noise of the children's

shrieks. The mothers did not seem in the least distressed or alarmed at the outcries of their offspring; indeed, one black lady remarked to me—I was the universal godmother—"C'est peut-être M. le Diable qui s'en va?" I can't think why the children were so terrified, because the bishop christened the babies first, and all was calm and holy peace until I attempted to lead up a small boy of about four years old. He started a wild yell and frantic struggles, in which all the others joined, till at last I felt inclined to take part in the chorus of sobs myself. The bishop's tact and gentle patience were marvellous, but did not avail to allay the fears of the neophytes.

Our last day at Rodrigues held, indeed, hard work, for we spent it from an early hour *en chasse*, the paraphernalia of which might have served for at least a small punitive expedition. Such munitions of war, in the shape of guns and cartridges! and the commissariat was on an equally liberal scale. This excursion took us quite to the other side of the island, and we crossed a little bay to get to it, so a small fleet of fishing-boats had been commandeered for the occasion. This brought us in touch with most of the fisherfolk, and F. seized the opportunity of thoroughly investigating their needs and wants.

There is really a good deal of game on the island;

deer, partridges, and wild guinea-fowl were promised us; but, alas! we had reckoned without the first lieutenant of the *Euryalus*, who availed himself of our absence to have a thoroughly happy day with his big guns, the noise of which drove every beast and bird as far away as possible. However, there was still the long delightful day in the open air, and it was always possible to get shade beneath the vacoas, a sort of palm, common also in Mauritius, of whose fibre sacks, baskets, and lots of useful things are made. But the *Latanier* is the maid-of-all-work among palms. All the little *cases* are built and thatched with it, its fibre makes excellent rope, and doubtless it could be turned to many other uses.

In spite of our really enormous luncheon, we were bidden to a banquet on our return to Port Mathurin, and that day actually ended with a ball! We had made ourselves independent of the tyranny of the tide for once, and had brought our evening things on shore with us, so a very sunburnt and sleepy group in uniforms and ball dresses made the best of their way on foot to the courthouse somewhere about nine o'clock, and absolutely danced with spirit and vigour until the coxswain put his head in at the door and murmured, "Tide's falling, sir." It was just about midnight, and we all fled like so many Cinderellas. No need to wrap up, for a lace scarf was sufficient on such

a balmy night, and the moonlight felt quite warm.

We certainly would not have been allowed to take so hurried a departure had it not been settled that we were to breakfast on shore next morning and make our real farewells then. The guard of honour and the *trompettes* preceded us once more, and there was a sort of attempt at an official "send-off." But the islanders took the matter into their own hands this time, and I really believe every human being in Rodrigues came to see us off, and to thank and bless "*Excellence*" for having paid them so long a visit. The *condamnés* were there too, and solemnly promised me to be models of good behaviour for the future. My numerous god-children were now (scantly) clothed, but in their right minds, and their mothers tried hard to get them to express their regret for having been *si méchant*; but that part of the performance did not come off. However, they got their bags of sugar plums all the same.

The inevitable address was got through in dumb show, and we were followed not only to the water's edge but into the water itself by the affectionate farewells of all the poor people. It was so touching, the way they brought gifts. Modeste was there with oranges and eggs in each hand. Indeed, I may mention here that eggs, however fresh, are very embarrassing tokens of affection when given

in dozens. I presented all mine to the fo'castle, as well as sundry sacks of oranges; and as for my bouquets, they would have stocked a flower-shop. It was quite with difficulty we pushed off at last. Fortunately, the tide allowed the admiral's barge to come up to the little jetty, for I am sure if we had started on a palm leaf, as we sometimes did, there would have been disasters and wet feet, to say the least of it.

By the time the *Euryalus* was reached, she was found to be ringed round by boats of all sorts and sizes, and it was quite difficult to get, first on board and then off. "Et vivat!" rang out in great force on every side, and even a tremulous "God-save"; but the hearty thanks and benedictions were the pleasantest sounds. At last the screw turned, and the fine old ship headed once more for the wide ocean. The boats and waving kerchiefs were soon dwarfed into so many dots on the dancing waves, and in an hour or two we had looked our last on Rodrigues.

The wind was fair for going back, and the voyage proved quite smooth as well as very pleasant. "Ces Messieurs avec les trompettes" discoursed delightful music to us after dinner, and the soft moonlight lasted all the way back. The dear old *Euryalus* has gone the way of old ships, but has happily left a smart successor to her name and fame. Regular communication (that is to say,

as regular as the hurricanes will allow) has been established with Rodrigues, and it must be more prosperous, for I see by the latest returns that the population has doubled itself since that delightful visit.



## XIV

### COLONIAL SERVANTS

My very first experience of the eccentricities of colonial servants dates a good deal more than half a century ago, and the scene was laid in Jamaica, where my father then held the office of "Island Secretary" under Sir Charles—afterwards Lord Metcalfe—the Governor. It was Christmas day, and I had been promised as a great treat that my little sister and I should sit up to late dinner. But the morning began with an alarm, for just at breakfast-time an orderly from one of the West Indian regiments, then stationed in Spanish Town, had brought a letter to my father which had been sent upstairs to him. I was curled up in a deep window-seat in the shady breakfast-room, enjoying a brand-new story-book and the first puffs of the daily sea-breeze, when I heard a guttural voice close to my ear whispering, "Kiss, missy, kiss." There stood what seemed a real black giant compared with my childish stature, clad in gorgeous Turkish-looking uniform with a big white turban and a most benignant

expression of face, holding his hand out, palm upwards.

I gazed at this apparition—for I had only just returned to Jamaica—with paralysed terror, while the smiling ogre came a step nearer and repeated his formula in still more persuasive tones. At this moment, however, my father appeared and said, "Oh yes, all right; he wants you to give him a Christmas-box. Here is something for him." It required even then a certain amount of faith as well as courage to put the silver dollar into the outstretched palm, but the man's joy and gratitude showed the interpretation had been quite right. I did not dare to say what my alarm had conjured up as the meaning of his request, for fear of being laughed at.

As well as I remember, at that Christmas dinner-party—and it was a large one—the food was distinctly eccentric, edibles usually boiled appearing as roasts and *vice versa*. The service also was of a jerky and spasmodic character, and the authorities wore an air of anxiety, which, however, only added to the deep interest I took in the situation. But things came to a climax when the plum-pudding, which was to have been the great feature of the entertainment, did not appear at its proper time and place, and a tragic whisper from the butler suggested complications in the background. My father said laughingly, "I am sorry to say the

cook is drunk and will not part with the plum-pudding," so we went on with the dinner without it. But just as the dessert was being put on the table there was a sound as of ineffectual scrimmaging outside, and the cook—a huge black man clad in spotless white—rushed in bearing triumphantly a large dish, which he banged down in front of my father, saying, "Dere, my good massa, dere your pudding," and immediately flung himself into the butler's arms with a burst of weeping. I shall always see that pudding as long as I live. It was about the size of an orange and as black as coal. Every attempt to cut it resulted in its bounding off the dish, for it was as hard as a stone. Though not exactly an object of mirth in itself, it certainly was "a cause that mirth was in others," and so achieved a success denied to many a better pudding.

Several years passed before I again came across black servants, and the next time was in India. I was not there long enough, nor did I lead a sufficiently settled life, to be able to judge of the Indian servant of that day. Half my stay in Bengal was spent under canvas, and certainly the way in which the servants arranged for one's comfort under those conditions was marvellous. The camp was a very large one, for we were making a sort of military promenade from Lucknow up to Lahore—my husband being the Commanding Officer of Royal Artillery in Bengal—but I only went as far as the

foot of the Hills and then up to Simla. It was amazing the way in which nothing was ever forgotten or left behind during four months' continuous camp-life. All my possessions had to be divided, and, where necessary, duplicated, for what one used on Monday would not be get-at-able until Wednesday, and so on all through the week. No matter how interesting my book was, I could not go on with it for thirty-six hours—*i.e.* from, say Monday night till breakfast-time on Wednesday morning. I could have a new volume for Tuesday, but the interest of that had also to remain in abeyance until Thursday. Still, I would find the book precisely where I laid it down, and if I had put a mark, even a flower, it would be found exactly in the right place.

I always wondered when and how the servants rested, for they seemed to me to be packing and starting all night long, and yet when the new camping-ground was reached the head-servants would always be there in snowy garments, as fresh and trim as if they came out of a box. There were two sets of under-servants, but the head ones never seemed to be off duty.

We started with the first streak of daylight, and there was no choice about the matter, for if you did not get up when the first bugle blew, your plight would be a sorry one when the canvas walls of the large double tent fell flat at the sound of the second

bugle, half-an-hour later. The roof of the tent was left a few moments longer, so one had time for hot fragrant coffee and bread and butter before starting either on horse or elephant back. I generally rode on a pad on the *hathi*'s back for the first few miles while it was still dark, and mounted my little Arab some six or eight miles further on. The marches were as near twenty-five miles daily, as could be arranged to suit the Commander-in-Chief's convenience as to inspections, &c.

Everything was fresh and amusing, but I think I most delighted in seeing the modes of progression adopted by the various cooks. Our head-cook generally requisitioned a sort of gig, in which he sat in state and dignity, with many bundles heaped around him. Part of his cavalcade consisted of two or three very small ponies laden with paniers, on top of which invariably stood a chicken or two, apparently without any fastenings, who balanced themselves in a precarious manner according to the pony's gait. No one seemed to walk except those who led the animals, and as the camp numbered some 5000 soldiers and quite as many camp-followers the supply-train appeared endless.

Just as we neared the foot of the Himalayan range, where the camp was to divide, some of us going up to Simla, leaving a greatly lessened force to proceed to Lahore, smallpox appeared among our servants. I wonder it did not spread much

more, but it was vigorously dealt with at the outset. I had as narrow an escape as anybody, for one morning, while I was drinking my early coffee and standing quite ready to start on our daily march, one of the servants, a very clever, useful Madras "boy" whom I had missed from his duties for several days, suddenly appeared and cast himself at my feet, clutching my riding-habit and begging for some tea. He was quite unrecognisable, so swollen and disfigured was his poor face, and I had no idea what was the matter with him. He was delirious and apparently half-mad with thirst. The doctor had to be fetched to induce him to let me go, and as more than once the poor lad had seized my hands and kissed them in gratitude for the tea I at once gave him, I suppose I really ran some risks, for it turned out to be a very bad case of confluent smallpox. However, all the same, he had to be carried along with us in a dhooly until we reached a station where he could be put into a hospital.

But certainly the strangest phase of colonial domestics within my experience were the New Zealand maid-servants of some thirty-five years ago. Perhaps by this time they are "home-made," and consequently less eccentric; but in my day they were all immigrants, and seemed drawn almost entirely from the ranks of factory girls. They were respectable girls apparently, but with very free and

easy manners. However, that did not matter. What seriously inconvenienced me at the far up-country station where my husband and I had made ourselves a very pretty and comfortable home was the absolute and profound ignorance of these damsels. They took any sort of place which they fancied, at enormous wages, and when they had at great cost and trouble been fetched up to their new home I invariably discovered that the cook, who demanded and received the wages of a *chef*, knew nothing whatever of any sort of cooking and the housemaid, had never seen a broom. They did not know how to thread a needle or wash a pocket-handkerchief, and, as I thought, must have been waited on all their lives. Indeed, one of my great difficulties was to get them away from the rapt admiration with which they regarded the most ordinary helps to labour. One day I heard peals of laughter from the wash-house, and found the fun consisted in the magical way in which the little cottage-mangle smoothed the aprons of the last couple of damsels. So I—who was extremely ignorant myself, and had no idea how the very beginnings of things should be taught—had to impart my slender store of knowledge as best I could. The little establishment would have collapsed entirely had it not been for my Scotch shepherd's wife, a dear woman with the manners of a lady and the knowledge of a thorough practical housewife. What broke our hearts was

that we had to begin this elementary course of instruction over and over again, as my damsels could not endure the monotony of their country life longer than three or four months, in spite of the many suitors who came a-wooing with strictly honourable intentions. But the young ladies had no idea of giving up their liberty, and turned a deaf ear to all matrimonial suggestions, even when one athletic suitor put another into the water-barrel to get him out of the way, and urged that this step must be taken as a proof of his devotion.

After the New Zealand experiences came a period of English life, and I felt much more experienced in domestic matters by the time my wandering star led me forth once more and landed me in Natal. In spite, however, of this experience, I fell into the mistake of taking out three English servants, whom I had to get rid of as soon as possible after my arrival. They had all been with me some time in England, and I thought I knew them perfectly; but the voyage evidently "wrought a sea change" on them, for they were quite different people by the time Durban was reached. Two developed tempers for which the little Maritzburg house was much too small, and when it came to carving-knives hurtling through the air I felt it was more than my nerves could stand. The third only broke out in folly, and showed an amount of personal vanity which seemed almost to border on insanity. How-



ever, I gradually replaced them with Zulu servants, in whom I was really very fortunate. They learned so easily, and were so good-tempered and docile, their only serious fault being the ineradicable tendency to return for a while—after a very few “moons” of service—to their kraals. At first I thought it was family affection which impelled this constant homing, but it was really the desire to get back to the savage life, with its gorges of half-raw meat and native beer, and its freedom from clothes. It is true I had an occasional very bad quarter of an hour with some of my experiments, as, for instance, when I found an embryo valet blacking his master’s socks as well as his boots, or detected the nurse-boy who was trusted to wheel the perambulator about the garden stuffing a half-fledged little bird into the baby’s mouth, assuring me it was a diet calculated to make “the little chieftain brave and strong.”

I think, however, quite the most curious instance of the thinness of surface civilisation among these people came to me in the case of a young Zulu girl who had been early left an orphan and had been carefully trained in a clergyman’s family. She was about sixteen years old when she came as my nursemaid, and was very plump and comely, with a beaming countenance, and the sweetest voice and prettiest manners possible. She had a great love of music, and performed harmoniously enough on

an accordion as well as on several queer little pipes and reeds. She could speak, read, and write Dutch perfectly, as well as Zulu, and was nearly as proficient in English. She carried a little Bible always in her pocket, and often tried my gravity by dropping on one knee by my side whenever she caught me sitting down and alone, and beginning to read aloud from it. It was quite a new possession, and she had not got beyond the opening chapters of Genesis and delighted in the story of "Dam and Eva," as she called our first parents. She proved an excellent nurse and thoroughly trustworthy; the children were devoted to her, especially the baby, who learned to speak Zulu before English, and to throw a reed assegai as soon as he could stand firmly on his little fat legs. I brought her to England after she had been about a year with me, and she adapted herself marvellously and unhesitatingly to the conditions of a civilisation far beyond what she had ever dreamed of. After she had got over her surprise at the ship knowing its way across the ocean, she proved a capital sailor. She took to London life and London ways as if she had never known anything else. The only serious mistake she made was once in yielding to the blandishments of a persuasive Italian image-man and promising to buy his whole tray of statues. I found the hall filled with these works of art, and "Malia" tendering, with sweetest smiles, a

few pence in exchange for them. It was a disagreeable job to have to persuade the man to depart in peace with all his images, even with a little money to console him. A friend of mine chanced to be returning to Natal, and proposed that I should spare my Zulu nurse to her. Her husband's magistracy being close to where Maria's tribe dwelt, it seemed a good opportunity for "Malia" to return to her own country; so of course I let her go, begging my friend to tell me how the girl got on. The parting from the little boys was a heart-breaking scene, nor was Malia at all comforted by the fine clothes all my friends insisted on giving her. Not even a huge Gainsborough hat garnished with giant poppies could console her for leaving her "little chieftain"; but it was at all events something to send her off so comfortably provided for, and with two large boxes of good clothes.

In the course of a few months I received a letter from my friend, who was then settled in her up-country home, but her story of Maria's doings seemed well-nigh incredible, though perfectly true.

All had gone well on the voyage and so long as they remained at Durban and Maritzburg; but as soon as the distant settlement was reached, Maria's kinsmen came around her and began to claim some share in her prosperity. Free fights were of constant occurrence, and in one of them

Maria, using the skull of an ox as a weapon, broke her sister's leg. Soon after that she returned to the savage life she had not known since her infancy, and took to it with delight. I don't know what became of her clothes, but she had presented herself before my friend clad in an old sack and with necklaces of wild animals' teeth, and proudly announced she had just been married "with cows" --thus showing how completely her Christianity had fallen away from her, and she had practically returned, on the first opportunity, to the depth of that savagery from which she had been taken before she could even remember it. I soon lost all trace of her, but Maria's story has always remained in my mind as an amazing instance of the strength of race-instinct.

My next colonial home was in Mauritius, and certainly the servants of that day—twenty years ago, alas!—were the best I have ever come across out of England. I am told that this is no longer the case, and that that type of domestic has been improved and educated into half-starved little clerks. The cooks were excellent, so were the butlers. Of course, they had all preserved the Indian custom of "dustoor" (I am not at all sure of the spelling) or perquisite. In fact, a sort of little duty was levied on every article of consumption in a household.

I never shall forget the agony of mind of one

of my butlers at having handed me a wrong statement of the previous day's "bazaar." I had really not yet looked at it, but he implored me with such dreadful agitation to let him have it back again to "correct" that I read it aloud before him, to his utter confusion and abasement. The vendor had first put down the price paid him for each article, and then the "dustoor" to be added; needless to say, I was to pay the difference, and the tax had been amply allowed for in the price charged. As "Gyp" would say, Tableau!

Curiously enough, it was the dhoby or washerman class which gave the most or rather the only trouble. They—*i.e.* the washerman and his numerous wives—fought so dreadfully. Once I received a petition requesting me in most pompous language to give the youngest or "last-joined" wife a good talking to, for in spite of all corrections—that is, beatings—she declined entirely to iron her share of the clothes, and had the effrontery to say she had not married an ugly old man to have to work hard. The dhoby on his side declared he had only incurred the extra expense and bother of a fourth and much younger wife in order that the "Grande Madame's" white gowns might be beautifully ironed, fresh every day.

I handed the letter—almost undecipherable on account of its ornate penmanship and flourishes—to the A.D.C. who was good enough to help me

with my domestic affairs, and he must have arranged it satisfactorily, for when he left us hurriedly to rejoin his regiment, which had been ordered on active service, he received a joint letter of adieu from all the dhobies, wishing him every sort of good fortune in the campaign, and expressing a hope that he might soon return with "*le croix de la reine Victoria flottant de sa casaque.*" Rather a confusion of ideas, but doubtless well meant.

In spite, however, of the general excellence of Mauritius servants, my very dignified butler at Réduit cost me the most trying experience of my party-giving career. Once upon a time I had an archery meeting at Réduit, and a dance afterwards for the young people. This programme—combining, as it did, afternoon and evening amusements—required a certain amount of organisation as to food. The shooting was to go on as long as the light lasted, and it was thought better to have the usual refreshments in the tents during that time, and then an early and very substantial supper indoors so soon after the dancing began as the guests liked to have it.

There used in those days to be an excellent restaurant in Port Louis which furnished all the ball suppers. The cost was high, but all trouble was saved, and the food provided left nothing to be desired. The manager of the "*Flore Mauri-*

cienne " never made a mistake, and only needed to be told how many guests to provide for ; everything was then sure to be beautifully arranged. So I had no anxieties on the score of ample supplies of every obtainable dainty being forthcoming. Great, therefore, was my surprise, when, after the first batch of guests had been in to the supper-room, I was informed in a tragic whisper that everything looked very nice in there, but that there was no second supply of food to replenish the tables. This seemed impossible, and I sent for the butler and demanded to know what had become of the supper. "Monsieur Jorge" smiled blandly and, waving his hands in despair, ejaculated "Rien, rien, Madame," repeatedly. So, although I had not intended to go in to supper myself just then, I hastened to the scene. There were the lovely tables as usual, a mass of flowers and silver, but with empty dishes. I felt as if it must be a bad dream from which I should presently awake, but that did not make it less terrible at the moment. Of course the A.D.C.s were active and energetic, but they could not perform miracles and produce a supper which they had themselves ordered and knew had arrived, but which seemed to have vanished into thin air. Tins of biscuits were found and sandwiches were hastily cut, and every one was most kind and good-natured and full of sympathy for me.

If "Monsieur Jorge" and his myrmidons had appeared in the least tipsy, the situation would have been less perplexing, but except a profound and impenetrable gravity of demeanour every servant seemed quite right. My guests danced merrily away, and hunger had no effect on their gay humour, but the staff and I (who had had no supper) were plunged in melancholy.

The moment our telegraph clerk came on duty next morning a message was sent to Port Louis (eight miles off) asking the manager of the "Flore" what had become of his supper, and by the time I came down to breakfast that worthy had appeared on the scene, and, more versed in the ways of Mauritian servants than any of us were, had elicited from Monsieur Jorge that he remembered putting the numerous boxes of supper away carefully, but where, he could not imagine. The night before he had insisted that he had placed all the supper there was, on the tables. So a search was instituted, and very soon the melancholy remains of the supper were discovered hidden away in an unused room. All the packing ice had, of course, melted, and jellies, &c., were reduced to liquid. There was about fifty pounds' worth of food quite spoiled and useless, most of it only fit to be thrown away. The manager's wrath really exceeded mine, and he stipulated that not one of the crowd of servants should have a crumb of the remains of that supper,



which I heard afterwards had been given to the garden coolies. As a matter of fact, I believe Monsieur Jorge *was* somewhat tipsy, and it took the form of complete loss of memory. But it was a dreadful experience.

From the "belle isle de Maurice" we went to Western Australia, where we arrived in the middle of winter, and the contrast seemed great in every way, especially in the domestic arrangements, for servants were few and far between and of a very elementary stamp of knowledge. I tried to remedy that defect by importing maid-servants, but succeeded only in acquiring some very strange specimens. In those days Western Australia was such an unknown and distant land that the friends at home who kindly tried to help me found great difficulty in inducing any good servant to venture so far, and although the wages offered must have seemed enormous, the good class I wanted could not at first be induced to leave England. Later, things improved considerably and we got very good servants, but the first importations were very disheartening. I used to be so amazed at their love of finery. To see one's housemaid at church absolutely covered with sham diamonds, large rings outside her gloves, huge *solitaire* earrings, and at least a dozen brooches stuck about her, was, to say the least of it, startling; so was the apparition of my head-cook, whom I sent for hurriedly once,

after dinner, and who appeared in an evening dress of black net and silver. I also recognised the kitchen-maid at a concert in a magnificent pale green satin evening dress, which, taken in conjunction with her scarlet hair, was rather conspicuous. Of one gentle and timid little house-maid, who did not dazzle me with her toilettes, I inquired what she found most strange and unexpected in her new home—which, by the way, she professed to like very much.

“The lemons, my lady, if you please.”

“Lemons !” I said ; “why ?”

“Well, it’s their growin’ on trees as is so puzzlin’ like, if you please.”

“Where else did you expect them to grow ?” I inquired.

“I thought they belonged to the nets. I’d always seen them in nets in shops, you know ; and lemons looks strange without nets.”

My next and last experience of colonial servants was in Trinidad. By this time I had gained so much and such varied experience that there was no excuse for things not working smoothly, and as I was fortunate in possessing an excellent head-servant who acted as house-steward I had practically no trouble at all, beyond a little anxiety at any time of extra pressure about the head-cook, who had not only heart disease, but when drunk flew into violent rages. Our doctor had warned

the house-steward that this man—who was a half-caste Portuguese from Goa—might drop dead at any moment if he gave way to temper and drink combined. So it was always an anxious time when balls and banquets and luncheons followed each other in quick succession. On these occasions, besides his two permanent assistants, G. was allowed a free hand as to engaging outside help. But he seemed to take that opportunity to bring in his bitterest foes, to judge by the incessant quarrels, all of long standing, which poor Mr. V. (the house-steward) had to arrange. I only did the complimenting, and after each ball supper or big dinner sent for the cook and paid him extravagant compliments on his efforts. That was the only way to keep him going, and things went well on the surface; but there were tragic moments to be lived through when the said cook had refreshed himself a little too often, and about midday would declare he had no idea what all these people were doing in his kitchens, and, arming himself with a rolling-pin, would drive them forth with much obloquy. I chanced to be looking out of my dressing-room window one day when he started a raid on the *corps d'armée* of black girls who were busily picking turkeys and fowls for the next night's ball supper. I never saw anything so absurd as the way the girls fled into the neighbouring nutmeg-grove, each clasping her

half-picked fowls and scattering the feathers out of her apron as she ran with many "hi! hi's!"

I really began to think it would be necessary to summon the police sentries to protect them, for G. was flinging all sorts of fruit and vegetables at them, and had quite got their range. However, as Mr. V. emerged from his office and began to inquire of the cook if he was anxious to die on the spot, I only looked on. At first there was nothing but rage and fury on the cook's part, to which Mr. V. opposed an imperturbable calm and the emphatic repetition of the doctor's warning. Then came a burst of weeping, caused, G. declared, by his sense of the wickedness of the human race in general and "dem girls" in particular. After that a deep peace seemed to suddenly descend on the scene, and the cook returned to his large and airy kitchens, still weeping bitterly. Mr. V. vanished, the picking girls reappeared one by one, and, cautiously looking round to see if it was safe to do so, took up their former positions under shady trees. Presently I saw other forms stealing back into the kitchens, from which they too had been forcibly ejected; and then I heard the cook's voice start one of Moody and Sankey's hymns, with apparently fifty verses and a rousing chorus. After that I had no misgivings as to the success of the supper.

We succeeded, as it were, to most of our servants,

for they had nearly all been at Government House for some years, and at all events knew their duties. I met one functionary, whose face I did not seem to know, on the staircase one day, and inquired who he was. "Me second butlare, please," was the answer. The first "butlare" was an intensely respectable middle-aged man, of apparently deeply religious convictions, and I always saw him at church every Sunday, and he was a regular and most devout communicant. Judge, then, of my surprise and dismay, when, poor Jacob having died rather suddenly of heart disease, I was assured that four separate and distinct Mrs. Jacobs had appeared, each clad in deepest widow's weeds, and each armed with orthodox "lines" to claim the small arrears of his monthly pay. But I am afraid that similar inconsistencies between theory and practice are by no means uncommon in those "Summer Isles of Eden."

## XV

### INTERVIEWS

My experience of being interviewed began many years before the invention of the present fashion of demanding from perfect strangers answers to questions which one's most intimate friend would hesitate to ask. My interviewers had not the smallest desire to be informed as to what I liked to eat or drink, or at what hour I got up of a morning. The conversation on these occasions used to be strictly confined to my visitor's own affairs. Perhaps "strictly" is not the word I want, for I well remember that my greatest difficulty at these interviews was to keep the information showered on me at all to the subject in hand, and to avoid incessant parenthetical reminiscences of bygone events.

Both in Natal and Mauritius we lived so far away from the town that it was too much trouble for the interviewer to seek me out, nor indeed do I remember hearing of cases which needed help and advice there so often as at other places.

My real *début* in being interviewed was made in

Western Australia some twenty years ago in the dear old primitive days, when I felt that I was the squire's wife and the rector's wife rolled into one, and most of the troubles used to be brought straight to me. Indeed, so numerous were my visitors of this class that a special room had to be set aside in which to receive them ; and certainly, if its walls had tongues as well as ears, some droll confidences might be betrayed by them.

But I must confess I began badly. Almost my first visitor in that room was a " pensioner's " widow. There can be very few " pensioners " left now, for fifteen years ago, when we left dear Western Australia, hardly thirty of the old " Enrolled Guard " survived. The colloquial name by which they were known in those latter days was Pensioner, though it does not really express their status.

Fifty years ago a large military force had been sent out to the Swan River Settlement—all that was then known of a colony now a million square miles in extent—to guard the convicts asked for by the first settlers to help them to make roads and bridges and public buildings. After twenty years the deportation of convicts to Western Australia ceased, and the troops were withdrawn.

As, however, it was desirable to induce respectable settlers to make the colony their home, special advantages had been offered to soldiers to remain and take up free grants of land. Many of those

who had wives and families accepted the offer, and, whenever they proved to be sober and industrious men, did extremely well. In addition to the liberal grants of land, each man was given a small pension, and ever since the convicts left his military functions had been confined to mounting guard at Government House. Even that slight duty came to an end, however, during our stay, and smart young policemen replaced the old veterans in out-of-date uniforms, their breasts covered with numerous medals for active service in all parts of the globe.

But to return to my first interviewer—an old Irishwoman, very feeble and very poor, her man long since dead, and the children apparently scattered to the four winds of heaven; the grant of land sold, the money spent, the pension always forestalled, and the inevitable objection to entering the colonial equivalent for “the House.” To more practised ears it would no doubt have sounded a suspicious story, but it went to my heart, and I gave the poor old body some tea and sugar, an order for a little meat, and—fatal mistake—a few shillings. Next day there was a coroner’s inquest on the charred remains of my unfortunate friend, who had got, as it seems she usually did, very drunk, and had tumbled into her own fireplace. Every one seemed to know how weak and foolish I had been in the matter of even that small gift of money, and the newspapers hinted that I must



be a Political Economist of the lowest type! So pensioners' widows tried in vain to "put the com-meth" on me after that experience.

"If you please, my lady, an 'Indoo wants to speak to you," ushered in a little later my next interviewer. I beheld a small, trim, and cleanly clad little man entering at the door. His request was for a pedlar's licence. I timidly pointed out that I did not deal in such things, and that he must have been wrongly advised to apply to me for the document. This brought on a rambling story, very difficult to comprehend until I furbished up the scanty remains of my own knowledge of Hindustani. I then gathered that my friend was somewhat of a black sheep in character as well as complexion, and had so indifferent a record in the police sheets that he could not get a licence to start a hawker's cart unless some one would become security for his good behaviour. He explained very carefully how he could manage to raise sufficient money to stock his cart, but no one would go security for him. I knew that hawkers made quite a good living in the thinly populated parts of the colony, and he seemed desperately in earnest in his desire to make a fresh start and gain his bread honestly. I told him that I would consult the Commissioner of Police and see him again; which I did, with the result that I went security for his good conduct myself! No doubt it was a rash thing to do, but I wanted him

to have another chance, and I impressed on him how keenly I should feel the disgrace if he did not run straight. "Very good, lady Sahib; I won't disgrace you," were his last words in his own language; and he never did. It all turned out like a story in a book, and two or three times a year my "Indoo" turned up, bringing a smiling little wife and an ever-increasing series of babies, to report himself as being on the high road to fortune, if not actually at her temple gate. It was one of the most satisfactory interviews that little back room witnessed.

Sometimes I had a very bad quarter of an hour trying to explain to the relatives of prisoners that I did not habitually carry the key of the big Jail in my pocket, and so was unable to go up that very moment, unlock its door, and let out their, of course, quite wrongfully tried and convicted friends. I have often been asked, "Why did you see these weeping women at all?" but at the time it was very hard to refuse, for, in so small a community as it then was, one knew something of the circumstances, and how hardly the trouble or disgrace pressed on the innocent members of the family. Sympathy was all there was to give, and it was impossible to withhold that.

Looking back on those interviews one sees how comedy treads all through life on the heels of tragedy, and I am sure to a listener the comic

element, even in the most pathetic tales, would have been supplied by my legal axioms. I used to invent them on the spot in the wildest manner, and I observed they always brought great comfort, which is perhaps more than can be claimed for the real thing. For instance, when I was very hard put to it once to persuade a weeping girl who had flung herself on her knees at my feet, and was entreating me to at once release her brother, who was in prison for manslaughter, that I had no power to give the order she begged for, I cried, "Why, my poor girl, the Queen of England could not do such a thing, how much less the wife of a Governor? I dare not even speak to my husband on the subject." I have often wondered since if the first part of that assertion was true. The second certainly was.

Although I could not promise to overthrow the action of the Supreme Court in the high-handed manner demanded of me, still I have never regretted my habit of seeing these poor women and listening to their sad stories. It really seemed to comfort them a little to know how truly sorry I felt for them, and I always tried to keep up their own self-respect, and so help them over the dark days. I had very few demands on me for money, which was seldom needed for such cases; only when illness—rare in the beautiful climate—supervened, was that sort of aid at all necessary.

But my interviewers did not invariably consist of supplicants against the course of justice. When it was found that a visit to me did not affect in any way the carrying out of the just-passed sentence, my petitioners fell off in numbers, for which I was very thankful. Sometimes I received visits of the gratitude which is so emphatically a sense of favours to come, but I very soon learned the futility of attempting to deal with those daughters of the horse-leech, and cut their visits as short as I could.

Once, however, after a brief interview with a fluent and very red-faced lady, leading a demure little boy by the hand, a great and bitter cry was raised in my establishment, and I was implored by my housemaids not to "see any more of them hussies." The lady in question said she came to thank me for letting her dear, innocent, good little boy out of the reformatory. In vain I protested that I knew nothing whatever about the matter. The boy had been one of six or seven little waifs who had been sent to the reformatory on Rottneet Island, where we always spent our summers. These children used to come down to me every Sunday afternoon for a sort of Bible lesson, which I tried to make as interesting as I could; but beyond their names I knew nothing about them. I found that they were well taught and cared for, and, as they could not possibly escape from the island (I never heard that they had ever tried to do so),

were allowed a good deal of liberty after the hours spent in school or the carpenter's shop. I presume this boy's sentence had expired in due course, and that he had returned to his loving mother; hence the wail from my distracted handmaidens, who found empty clothes-lines in the back-yard, through which these visitors had departed, taking with them all the socks, stockings, and pocket-handkerchiefs of the whole household. As a feat of legerdemain it certainly deserves credit for the rapidity with which it was done, as well as the way the articles had been hidden so as to escape the sentries' eyes. I don't know what happened to the lady, who I heard was quickly caught, but I saw the little boy, looking as cherubic as ever, the next summer when we went over to Rottnest. The subject was, however, never alluded to between us, and he used to get his stick of barley sugar as did the others after the Bible lesson was ended.

Once I had a visit from a delightful old gentleman who certainly possessed the nicest "derangement of epitaphs" I have ever met with in real life. And he was so proud of his choice language, and repeated his distorted expressions so constantly, that I don't know how I preserved the smallest show of gravity. He was an office-keeper of some sort, and was threatened with the loss of his post for neglect of duty. "You know, my lady, it's with regard to that there office fire. I

never did know fires was my special providence, never. No one could be more partikler than me about my dooty. Why, when we was over at Rottnest last year, I was always a prevaricating with the shore for orders. There was never no inadvartences about me, never;" and so on. I wish I could remember half his flowers of rhetoric.

There was, however, one class of interviewer of whom I saw far too many specimens during the last year or two of my stay in Western Australia. The colony had been making great progress in every direction. The first indications of its splendid gold-fields were passing from vague rumours to hopeful facts. Railways were being rapidly pushed on to every point of the compass, work at high wages was plentiful, and every week brought ship-loads of men for the railways and all other public works. As a rule, I believe, the immigrants were fairly satisfactory, and I heard of the various contractors gladly absorbing large numbers of workmen. In many instances these men brought their wives and families with them, and it was with the modern colonist's wife that my troubles began.

I had heard wonderful stories of the struggles and hardships of the early settlers, and admired the splendid spirit in which the older sons and daughters started empire-building. One dear old lady showed me the packing-case of a grand piano, which she declared she should always treasure,

as she had brought up a large and healthy family in it.

"You see, my dear, my piano was not much use to me in those days, and I don't know what became of it, but the case made a splendid crèche for the babies." And on every side I saw instances of difficulties overcome and hardships borne with the same indomitable pluck and cheerfulness. But the modern colonist's wife is a very different lady. We seem to have educated the original woman off the face of the earth, and we have got instead a discontented, helpless sort of person, who is wretched without all the latest forms of civilisation, who wants "a little 'ome" where she can put her fans and yellow vases on the walls, and sit indoors and do crewel work.

One woman wept scalding tears over the cruel fate which brought her to a country as yet innocent of Kindergartens. She had two sweet little girl-babies, certainly under three years old, who looked the picture of rosy health. I tried to comfort her by saying that surely there was no hurry about their education.

"Oh no, it's not the schooling I mind, ma'am," she sobbed; "it's the getting 'em out of the way. They do mess about so, and I want 'em kept safe and quiet out of the house." This elegant lady's hardships consisted in being required to go a hundred miles or so up the railway line to live in

a little township, where her husband had highly paid work. She wished me to tell him that she could not possibly go away from Perth, though she despised our little capital very heartily. I declined to interfere, and told her she ought to be ashamed of herself, so she ended the interview by sobbing out that "she did think a lady as was a lady might feel for her."

"And what can I do for you?" was my question to a neat, rather nervous young woman, who said she was Mrs. Jakes.

"Well, mum, would you be so good as to ask his Excellency to order Mr. ——" (the great contractor of that day) "to send my 'usband back to me."

"Why?" I inquired.

"Well, mum, Jakes, he wants me to go up the line ever so far and live in a bush, leastways in a tent, and I never can do it."

"Dear me, why not?" I inquired. "Many of my friends camp out in the bush, and like it very much. Why don't you go?"

With a deeply disgusted glance at my cheerful aspect Mrs. Jakes answered with dignity, "I don't 'old with living among wild beasts, mum, and Jakes ought to be ashamed of 'isself asking a decent woman to go and live in bushes with lions and tigers."

As soon as I could speak for laughing, I assured Mrs. Jakes that the forests of Western Australia



were absolutely innocent of such denizens, but she did not seem to willingly believe my assertions, and left me much disappointed at my advice to go up and join her husband, who was perfectly well and happy, and working for excellent wages.

I stopped at that very same road-side station later, in one of my spring excursions after wild flowers, and I inquired if Jakes was still working there. "Yes; he is a capital man, and is now foreman, getting over two pounds a week." So then I asked to be conducted to his tent, which I found pitched in a lovely sylvan glade, and there, to my great satisfaction, I saw Mrs. Jakes preparing his tea. She was fain to confess that bush-life was very different from her alarming anticipations of it. She looked ever so much better herself, and the children, whom I carried off to tea with me—only on account of the buns—were as rosy as the dawn.

Some of my interviews were too sad to be spoken of here: interviews in which I had often to helplessly witness the awful creeping back to the capacity for suffering which is the worst stage in that long *via dolorosa*.

One terrible night, spent in walking up and down the shore at Rottneest with a distracted lighthouse-keeper, who had just heard that his young wife had been wrecked and lost on her way out to him, can never be forgotten. The poor man was literally

beside himself. His mates brought him down to me, declaring that they could not manage him, and felt sure he meant to jump into the sea. There was not much to be said, so we paced the shore in the moonlight outside my house in silence. I did not dare to leave him for a moment, and it was not until I saw the smoke of the kitchen fire very early in the morning that I took him indoors, gave him some hot tea, and made him go and lie down. He promised me, like a child, "to be good," and kept his word bravely—poor, heart-broken mourner.

And then there was my "loving boy Corny," a red-headed imp of mischief, whose mother used, when he "drove her past her patience," to bring him to me to scold. Poor Corny's mischief was only animal spirits unemployed, and we became great friends. The difficulty was to induce Corny to go to school or to learn anything, but it chanced that I was going to England for a few months, and Corny declared himself grieved, so I promised to write to him regularly, if he would learn to write to me, which he did with ease, clever little monkey that he was, and signed himself as above. From what I knew of Corny I strongly suspect he would be one of the very first to volunteer for service in South Africa. Our troublesome boys generally make splendid "soldiers of the Queen," and bestow their troublesomeness on her enemies.

Instead of interviews, which were seldom or

never asked for in the next colonies we went to, I was assailed by letters, which, however, were chiefly directed to the Governor, who passed on some to me in inquire into, though the Inspector-General of Police made short work of those submitted to him. A visit from a constable to the suppliant's address would generally discover the existence of a very different state of affairs from what was represented in the piteous application. A youthful and starving family, afflicted by divers strange maladies, would resolve itself into a comfortable old couple, who could not even be made the least ashamed of their barefaced imposture.

The language employed in these begging letters was of the finest, if not always the most intelligible. I sometimes wondered in what dictionary they found the words they used. For instance, here is a literal copy of what I imagine was meant for a sort of appeal from a decision on a very barefaced case of imposture. "We rectitudely beg to recognise our hesitation of his Excy's dogma thereon."

Perhaps the most wonderful of these epistles purported to come from an old woman who begged for money, and detailed her ill-success in obtaining an order for a coffin for her daughter, who, she declared, was "in a ridiculous condition on the roof of her cottage." This statement seemed to open up such a vista of horrors that a mounted

policeman was at once despatched to inquire into the case. It was then found that the young lady was in rude health and wanted the money for toilette purposes.

One of the most unsatisfactory interviews I ever had was in one of those languid sunny isles. My interviewer was a nice, pretty young widow, slightly coloured, who had lost her excellent husband under very sad and sudden circumstances. Of course, help was forthcoming for the moment, but it was suggested that I should try to find out from her how she could be helped to earn her own living. She appeared at the stated hour, most beautifully and expensively dressed, and had charming, gentle manners. But any one so helpless I never came across. She seemed to have received a fairly good education, but to be quite incapable of using it. I asked if she would undertake the care of little children. "Oh, no!" she "did not like children." Could she set up as a dressmaker? "Oh, no!" she "did not like dressmaking," and so on through every sort of occupation. There were plenty of openings for any talent of any sort which she might possess. At last, in despair, I asked if she had a plan of her own, and it seems she had, but the plan consisted in my making her a handsome weekly allowance out of a large fund which she had been told I had at my disposal. This I energetically denied, so at last she wound up by asking

if I would order a certain insurance office to pay her a small sum for which her husband's life had been insured. I suggested that no doubt she would receive the money in due time without my interference. But she thought not, "Because the premiums had not been paid lately, as she always wanted the money for something else." Dress, I should think.

I often wish I had kept any of the wonderful letters we received upon every sort of subject. One was addressed to "Sa Majesté le Roi de Trinidad," and contained a request for a decoration or order of some unknown kind. Another, with a similar address, only asked for stamps. It appeared later that both these epistles were intended for the other Trinidad, which at present is only inhabited by hermit-crabs, and certainly could not be expected to furnish either commodity.

## XVI

### A COOKING MEMORY

I OFTEN think, as I pass the handsome and substantial building in Buckingham Palace Road, known as the National School of Cookery, how much it has grown and developed since my day, nearly thirty years ago.

That was indeed the "day of small things," for we started work in a series of sheds, lent by the trustees of the South Kensington Museum, in Exhibition Road, near what used to be the temporary site of the Royal School of Art Needlework. The idea originated with the late Sir Henry Cole, and was one of the many excellent plans he conceived and started. As often happens, the first outcome of Sir Henry's scheme proved widely different from his original intention; but on the whole there is no doubt that the teaching of the National School of Cookery has worked a great improvement in our culinary ideas and knowledge.

Sir Henry at once gathered a strong working committee together, including the late Duke of Westminster, the late Lord Granville, Mr. Hans

Busk, Sir Daniel Cooper, Mr. (Rob Roy) McGregor and many other experts. I was asked to be the first Lady Superintendent, to my deep amazement, for I have never cared in the least what I ate, provided it was "neat and clean." I was a very busy woman in those days, and it seemed difficult to give the necessary time to the school, from 10 A.M. to 4.30 P.M. every day except Saturday afternoon. I have, however, never regretted the extra work my acceptance entailed, for it was of incalculable benefit to me to learn Sir Henry Cole's method of dealing with subjects, and to watch his habits of patient attention and care of even the minutest details.

We started with very little money to our credit—as well as I remember, less than two hundred pounds; but Sir Henry had thorough confidence in the depth of the purse of the British public. This confidence was abundantly justified, for want of money was never one of the difficulties besetting our earliest efforts towards teaching a better kind of cooking. We at once set to work to provide ourselves with really good cooks, and in this respect we were exceptionally fortunate, for three out of the five young women we selected remained with us many years, and indeed they were all very satisfactory. The only thing I had to teach them was how to impart their knowledge, for they jibbed, as it were, at the idea of

having to speak aloud, especially to ladies. There were dreadful moments when I feared I should never be able to induce them to accompany their lessons by a few explanatory words, loud enough to be heard, at every stage of the dish. I acted a whole benchful of pupils of every grade of ignorance before them, without eliciting anything beyond painfully deep blushes or an occasional laugh. So long as I was the only imaginary pupil we did not make much progress; but at last I left them alone, to get on their own way, with just two or three clever girls as their first pupils, whom I had previously begged to ask every sort of question about the very beginning of things.

It is pleasant to think that my successor—who is still the lady superintendent of the school—was one of those same pupils, and so took an early part in removing one of the greatest difficulties. In spite of much impatience on the part of the public, who were, as usual, possessed by an erroneous idea of what the work of the school aimed at, we had to devote some weeks to this same teaching of the teachers, and organisation of what was to be taught.

There was no difficulty about providing ranges and stoves of every sort and kind, for the makers of such wares offered us numerous samples. It was, however, necessary for the five cooks to sit in judgment on each novelty, and decide whether it was



worth accepting, for of course we wanted to use the best sort of cooking apparatus, but yet not to depart too much from familiar paths. We felt sure it would be of no use teaching beginners to cook on a stove or range which, from its costliness or some other reason, would be rarely met with. Every sort of cooking utensil was also offered to us free of expense, besides many and various kinds of patent fuel; but this latter gift was invariably declined with thanks by the cooks, who would have none of it.

Sir Henry Cole had foreseen that we ought to begin at the very beginning, so the first thing taught was how to clean a stove with all its flues, puzzling little doors, &c. Then it was ordained that the practical pupil was to be shown how to clean, quickly and thoroughly, saucepans, frying-pans, and in short all kitchen utensils. This was followed by a course of scrubbing tables and hearths. The morning lessons were devoted generally to the acquisition of this useful knowledge, supplemented by little lectures on choosing provisions, and how to tell good from bad, fresh from stale, and so forth. In the afternoons—for the poor cooks had to be given an interval of rest and refreshment—the lessons were given in two ways: by demonstration, where the instructor prepared the dish before her class from the beginning, and the pupils watched the process and

took notes ; or else by practical experience, where they prepared and cooked the dish themselves under the cook's superintendence.

In those early days we attempted the cooking only of simple food ; such as soups and broths, plain joints, simple entrées, pastry, puddings, jellies, salads, and such like. One day was set apart entirely for learning "sick-room cookery," and this was found to be very popular, only the pupils invariably began by asking to be shown how to make poultices ! I soon observed that each of these very nice cooks of ours excelled in just *one* thing, and so they had to fall into line, as it were, and the soup-lesson would be given by the expert in soups, and so all through. Fortunately one dear, nice little woman had a perfect genius for sick-room cookery, and that day's lessons were confided entirely to her. Not one of them, however, could make really good pastry, for we aimed at producing the very best of everything we attempted. I tried in vain to get it right, until I mentioned my difficulty to Lord Granville, who at once sent his *chef* down to give private lessons to the cook whose ideas on pastry were most nearly what we wanted. This was a great help and of immense benefit ; but I was much amused when, a week or two after, as I was sitting in my little office—all very shabby and inconvenient, but we were too deeply interested to

mind trifles—a most elegant young gentleman appeared, faultlessly attired, and carrying a large envelope, which, with a beautiful bow, he tendered to me.

“What is this?” I inquired.

“A State Paper on Pastry, Madam,” was the answer, and the bearer of the important document proved to be the *chef* himself, who had taken the trouble to commit his lesson to paper.

At last everything was ready, and one fine Monday morning the school opened its doors to a perfect rush of pupils. We ought to have been happy, but Sir Henry certainly was not, for these same pupils were by no means the class he wanted to get at. Fine ladies of every rank, rich women, gay Americans in beautiful clothes, all thronged our kitchens, and the waiting carriages looked as if a smart party were going on within our dingy sheds. It was certainly a very curious craze, and I can answer for its lasting the two years I was superintendent. I asked many of the ladies why they insisted on coming to learn how to clean kitchen ranges and scrub wooden tables, as nothing short of a revolution could possibly make such knowledge useful to them, and I received very curious answers. One friend said it was because of their Scotch shooting-box, where such knowledge would come in very handy; but this statement has never been borne out by any subsequent ex-

perience of my own. Others said they wanted to set an example. Some stated that their husbands wished it; but I cannot imagine why, as they were all people who could afford excellent cooks.

For a long time we could not get one of the class we wanted, nor did a single servant come to learn, though the fees were purposely made as low as possible—in fact, almost nominal for servants. We also wished to get hold of the class of young matron who is represented in *Punch* as timidly imploring her cook “not to put lumps in the melted butter,” but even they were very shy of coming. Sometimes, I think, they were really ashamed of their stupendous and amazing ignorance, for it was in that rank we found, when we did catch one or two, that the most absolute want of knowledge of the simplest domestic details existed. Whether or no it is due to the many schools of cookery which now happily exist all over Great Britain, I will not venture to say; but surely it would be impossible nowadays for any young woman to give me the answer one of our earliest pupils gave. She was very young and very pretty, and we all consequently took the greatest interest in her progress; but alas! she was privately reported to me as being a most unpromising subject. One day, when her lesson was just over, I chanced to meet her and inquired how she was getting on. She took the most hopeful

view, and declared she "knew a lot." I next asked her to tell me what she had learned that day.

"Oh, let me see; we've been doing breakfast dishes, I think."

"And what did you learn about them?"

"I learned"—this with an air of triumph—"that they are all the same eggs which you poach or boil. I always thought they were a different sort of egg, a different *shape*, you know!"

I think one of my greatest worries was the way in which the British middle-class matron regarded the National School of Cookery as an institution for supplying her with an excellent cook, possessing all the virtues as well as all the talents, at very low wages. Every post brought me sheaves and piles of letters entering into the minutest details of the writers' domestic affairs, and requesting—I might almost say ordering—me to send them down next day one of the treasures I was supposed to manufacture and turn out by the score. In vain I published notices that the school was not a registry office, and that no cooks could be "sent from it." Sometimes I tried to cope with any particularly beseeching matron by writing to explain the nature of the undertaking, and suggesting that she should send her cook, or *a* cook, to learn; but this always made her very indignant. At last I found the only way to get rid of the intolerable nuisance of such correspondents was to

answer by a lithographed post-card, stating that the school did not undertake to supply cooks. This missive appeared to act as a bombshell in the establishment; for apparently the existing cook immediately gave warning, eliciting one more despairing shriek of "See what you have done," to me, from the persevering mistress. I was not, however, so inhuman as to launch this missile until I had many times said the same thing, either by letter or by enclosing printed notices of the work and plan of the school.

I often wonder we had not more accidents, considering the crass ignorance of our ladies. Oddly enough, the only alarming episode came to us from a girl of the people, one of four who had begged to be allowed to act as kitchen-maids. Their idea was a good one, for of course they got their food all day, and were at least in the way of picking up a good deal of useful knowledge. These girls also cleaned up after the class was over, so saving the poor weary cooks, who early in the undertaking remarked, with a sigh, "The young ladies do make such a mess, to be sure!" Well, this girl, who was very steady and hard-working, but abnormally stupid, saw fit one morning to turn on the gas in certain stoves some little time beforehand. The sheds were so airy—to say the least of it—that there was not sufficient smell to attract any one's attention, and the gas accumulated comfortably

in the stoves until the class started work. It chanced to be a lesson in cooking vegetables, and potatoes were the "object." About twenty-five small saucepans had been filled with water and potatoes, and the next step was to put them on to boil. I was not in that kitchen at the moment, or I hope I should have perceived the escape, and have had the common-sense to forbid a match being struck to light the gas in certain stoves. But I was near enough to hear a loud "pouf," followed by cries of alarm and dismay, and I rushed in while the potatoes were still in the air, for they went up as high as ever they could get. Happily no one was hurt, though a good deal of damage was done to some of the stoves; but it was a very narrow escape, owing doubtless to the space and involuntary ventilation of these same sheds. In the midst of my alarm I well remember the ridiculous effect of that rain of potatoes. Every one had forgotten all about them, and their re-appearance created as much surprise as though such things had never existed.

I am afraid the object of much of the severity of cleanliness taught in the morning lessons was to discourage the numerous fine and smart ladies who beset our doors, though Sir Henry had always declared it was only to test their intentions. I always made a round of the kitchens after work had been started, and it was really touching to

see beautiful gowns pinned back and covered by large coarse aprons, and jewelled hands wielding scrubbing brushes. Once, as I came round the corner, I heard one of the cook teachers say to a fair pupil who was kneeling amid a great slop of soapy water, and calling upon her to admire the scrubbing of a kitchen table, "No, my lady, I'm afraid that won't do 'at all. You see her ladyship" (that was I, *bien entendu*) "is a tiger about the legs!" I certainly had no idea such was my character.

I wonder what has become of all the certificates gained, with a great deal of trouble and fatigue, by strict and lengthy examinations, which used to be so proudly exhibited, framed and glazed, in stately mansions thirty years ago.

Of course there were absurd proposals made to us of all sorts and kinds. It was suggested by some wiseacres that we should instruct both the army and navy, to say nothing of the merchant service. I entreated to be allowed first to teach the ordinary middle-class cook of the British Empire, before I soared to the instruction of its gallant defenders. True, that same cook was a very shy bird to catch, and I really never caught her in the two short years of my management; but I am glad to know that my successor has since managed to attract and teach the exact class we always wanted to reach. The odd thing is,



that the cooks generally did not want to be taught, and I have constantly known of lessons being declined, even when they were offered at the expense of the mistress. No reason whatever against the method of the school was given, and the refusal seemed to spring merely from a dislike to be taught : "Thank you, ma'am ; I had rather not," being the general formula. I know of one or two instances where an excellent teacher had been sent down from the school by special request to a small town some thirty miles from London, but when the various mistresses in the neighbourhood attempted to form a class of pupils from their own servants and at their own expense, they were met on all sides by flat refusals, and assurances that the cooks would rather give up their situations than join a cooking class. Those were among the early and the most disheartening difficulties of the school. If we could only have infused the desire for culinary knowledge, which seemed suddenly to take possession of the ladies, into the minds of their humbler sisters, how glad we should have been !

I cannot conclude this paper without telling of one of my own most confusing experiences, the problem of which has never been solved. One day I received a letter stating that the writer was most anxious to become a pupil of the school. It was from a young curate in a distant and out-

of-the-way part of the north (I think) of England. I never read a more clever and amusing letter, describing his sufferings in the food line at the hands of the good woman who "did" for him in his modest lodging. He was evidently desperate, and professed himself determined to learn how to cook, so as to be independent of this dame. But although I assured him of my profound sympathy and pity, I had at the same time to decline him as a pupil, alleging that we did not teach men at all. Letter after letter followed this pronouncement of mine, each one droller than the last, though the poor man was evidently in deadly earnest all the time. He pleaded and besought in the most eloquent words, assuring me of his harmless nature and wishes, offering to send testimonials as to character, &c., from his bishop, or his rector's wife, anything, in short, that I required to convince me of his worthiness. I had no time, however, to waste on so fruitless, though so amusing, a correspondence, and I had to cut it short, by merely repeating the rule, and declining peremptorily to go on with the subject. I had nearly forgotten all about it, when, one morning, some weeks later, my deputy-superintendent came into my office and said :—

"There is such a queer girl among the new pupils this morning."

"Is there ? What is she like ?" I asked rather

indifferently, for a "queer girl" was by no means unknown in the crowded classes.

"Well, she is so big and so awkward, as if she had never worn petticoats before, and has such huge hands and feet, and quite short hair with a cap, and, oh! such a deep voice. But she works very hard, and is rushing through her lesson at a great rate."

"What is her name?" I asked, as a light seemed suddenly to dawn on me.

"Miss—Miss—oh, here it is," said the deputy-lady, holding out the counterfoil of her book of receipts for fees. "She sent me up a post-office order for the fees some little time ago, but there was no room for her in any class until to-day."

I looked at the name, rather a remarkable one, though I have quite forgotten it, turned to the letter-book, and, lo, it was the same as the curate's! I did not say anything to my second in command, but made an opportunity for going into the kitchen where the "queer girl" would be at work. No need to ask for her to be pointed out, for a more singular-looking being I never beheld, working away with feverish energy. The cook who was giving the lesson told me afterwards that the dismay of that pupil was great at being first set to clean stoves and scrub tables, and that "she" had piteously entreated, in a deep bass voice, to be shown at once how to cook a mutton chop. The

set of lessons were also much curtailed in that instance, for the queer girl did not appear after the end of that week, instead of going on for another fortnight.

There is every reason to believe that the National School of Cookery—in which I must always take a deep interest—is much nearer now to fulfilling its original design of constant and careful instruction in the difficult art of cooking than it was in those early but amusing days, and its many constant friends and supporters must rejoice to see how it has emerged from that chrysalis stage and become a self-supporting concern, doing steady excellent work in the most unobtrusive manner.

## XVII

### BIRD NOTES

A GREAT reaction of feeling in favour of the mongoose has set in since Mr. Rudyard Kipling's delightful story of "Rikki-tikki," in the "First Jungle Book," presenting that small animal in an heroic and loveable aspect. But to the true bird-lover the mongoose still appears a dreaded and dangerous foe. It is well known that its introduction into Jamaica has resulted in nearly the extermination of bird life in that island, and the consequent increase of insects, notably the diminutive tick, that mere speck of a vicious little torment.

There are, I believe, only a very few mongooses in Barbados, and strong measures will doubtless be adopted to still further reduce their number; for no possible advantage in destroying the large brown rat which gnaws the sugar-cane can make up for the havoc the mongoose creates in the poultry yard, and, indeed, among all feathered creatures. It has also been found by experience that the mongoose prefers eggs to rats, and will

neglect his proper prey for any sort or size of egg. He was brought into Jamaica to eat up the large rat introduced a century ago by a certain Sir Charles Price (after whom those same brown rats are still called), instead of which the mongoose has taken to egg and bird eating, and has thriven on this diet beyond all calculation. Sir Charles Price introduced his rat to eat up the snakes with which Jamaica was then infested, and now that the mongoose has failed to clear out the rats, some other creature will have to be introduced to cope with the swarming and ravenous mongoose.

It was therefore with the greatest satisfaction I once beheld in the garden at Government House, Barbados, the clever manner the birds circumvented the wiles of a half-tame mongoose which haunted the grounds.

Short as is the twilight in those Lesser Antilles, there was still, at midsummer, light enough left in the western sky to make it delightful to linger in the garden after our evening drive. The wonder and beauty of the hues of the sunset sky seemed ever fresh, and every evening one gazed with admiration, which was almost awe, at the marvellous undreamed of colours glowing on that gorgeous palette. Crimson, yellows, mauves, palest blues, chrysoprase greens, pearly greys, all blent together as if by enchantment, but changing as you looked and melting into that deep, inde-

scribable, tropic purple, which forms the glorious background of the "meaner beauties of the night."

In this same garden there chanced to be a couple of low swinging seats just opposite a large tree, which I soon observed was the favourite roosting place of countless numbers of birds. Indeed, all the fowls of the air seemed to assemble in its branches, and I was filled with curiosity to know why the other trees were deserted. At roosting time the chattering and chirruping were deafening, and quarrels raged fiercely all along the branches. I noticed that the centre of the tree was left empty, and that the birds edged and sidled out as far as ever they could get on to its slenderest branches. All the squabbles arose from the ardent desire with which each bird was apparently filled to be the very last on the branch and so the nearest to its extreme tip. It can easily be understood that such thin twigs could not stand the weight of these crowding little creatures, and would therefore bend until they could no longer cling to it, and so had to fly off and return to search for another foothold. I had watched this unusual mode of roosting for several evenings, without getting any nearer to the truth than a guess that the struggle was perhaps to secure a cool and airy bed-place.

One hot evening, however, we lingered longer in what the negro gardener called the "swinggers,"

tempted by the cool darkness, and putting off as long as possible the time of lights and added heat, and swarming winged ants, and moths, and mosquitoes. We had begun to think how delightful it would be to have no dinner at all, but just to stay there, gently swaying to and fro all night, when we saw a shadow—for at first it seemed nothing more—dart from among the shadows around us, and move swiftly up the trunk of the tree. At first I thought it must be a huge rat, but my dear companion whispered, "Look at the mongoose!" So we sat still, watching it with closest attention. Soon it was lost in the dense central foliage, and we wondered at the profound stillness of that swarming mass of birds, who had not long settled into quiet. Our poor human, inadequate eyes had, however, become so accustomed to the gloom by its gradual growth, that presently we could plainly observe a flattened-out object stealthily creeping along an out-lying bough. It was quite a breathless moment, for no shadow could have moved more noiselessly than that crawling creature. Even as we watched, the bough softly and gradually bent beneath the added weight, but still the mongoose stole onwards. No little sleeping ball of feathers was quite within reach, so yet another step must needs be taken along the slender branch. To my joy that step was fatal to the hopes of the brigand



beast, for the bough dipped suddenly, and the mongoose had to cling to it for dear life, whilst every bird flew off with sharp cries of alarm which effectually roused the whole population of the ærial city, and the air was quite darkened round the tree by fluttering, half-awakened birds.

It was plain now to see the reason of the proceedings which had so puzzled me, and once more I felt inclined to—as the Psalmist phrases it—“lay my hand on my mouth and be still,” in wonder and admiration of the adaptable instincts of birds. How long had it taken these little helpless creatures to discover that their only safety lay in just such tactics, and what sense guided them in choosing exactly the one tree which possessed slender and yielding branch-tips which were yet strong enough to support their weight? They were just settling down again when horrid clamorous bells insisted on our going back into a hot, lighted-up house, and facing the additional miseries of dressing and dinner. Though we carefully watched that same tree and its roosting crowds for many weeks, we never again saw the mongoose attempt to get his supper there, so I suppose he must also be credited with sufficient cleverness to know when he was beaten.

A Toucan does not often figure in a list of tame birds, and I cannot conscientiously recommend it as a pet. Mine came from Venezuela and was

given to me soon after our arrival in Trinidad. It must have been caught very young, for it was perfectly tame, and, if you did not object to its sharp claws, would sit contentedly on your hand. The body was about as big as that of a crow, but it may be described as a short, stout bird, with a beak as large as its body. Upon the shining surface of this proboscis was crowded all the colours certainly of the rainbow, blended in a prismatic scale. The toucan's plumage would be dingy if it were not so glossy, and it was of a blue-black hue with white feathers in the wings and just a little orange under the throat to shade off the bill, as it were. Some toucans have large fleshy excrescences at the root of the bill, but this one and those I saw in Trinidad had not.

The toucan was, however, an amiable and, at first, a silent bird. He lived in a very large cage, chiefly on fruit, and tubbed constantly. But the curious and amusing thing was to see him preparing to roost, and he began quite early, whilst other birds were still wide awake. The first thing was to carefully cock up—for it was a slow and cautious proceeding—his absurd little scut of a tail which was only about three or four inches long. This must in some way have affected his balance, for he never moved on the perch after the tail had been laid carefully back. Then, later in the evening, he gently turned the huge unwieldy

bill round by degrees, until it too was laid along his back and buried in feathers in the usual bird fashion. By the way, I have always wondered how and why the myth arose that birds sleep with their heads *under* their wings? A moment's thought or observation would show that it is quite as impossible a feat for a bird as for a human being. However, the toucan's sleeping arrangements resulted in producing an oval mass of feathers supported on one leg, looking as unlike a bird as it is possible to imagine. When he was ruthlessly awakened by a sudden poke or noise, which I grieve to state was often done—in my absence, needless to say—I heard that he invariably tumbled down in a sprawling heap, being unable to adjust the balance required by that ponderous bill all in a moment.

For many months after his arrival the toucan was at least an unobjectionable pet and very affectionate. He used to gently take my fingers in his large gaudy bill and nibble them softly without hurting me, but I never could help thinking what a pinch he might give if he liked. His inoffensive ways, however, only lasted while he was very young, for in due course of time he began to utter discordant yells and shrieks, especially during the luncheon hour. This could not be borne, and the house-steward—a most dignified functionary—used to advance towards the cage in a stately manner

with a tumbler of water concealed behind his back which he would suddenly fling over the screaming bird. The toucan soon learned what Mr. V.'s appearance before his cage meant, and always ceased his screaming at the mere sight of an empty tumbler. These sudden douches, or else his adolescence, must have had a bad effect on his temper, for he could no longer be petted and played with, and any finger put within reach of his bill suffered severely. Then he got ill, poor bird, and the Portuguese cook was called in to doctor him. But the remedies seemed so heroic that I determined to send the toucan away. I could not turn him loose in the garden on account of his piercing screams, so he was caught when asleep, packed in a basket, and conveyed to the nearest high woods, where he was set at liberty, and I can only hope he lived happy ever after, as a less gaudy and beauteous variety of toucan is to be found in those virgin forests.

As might naturally be expected, there are many beautiful birds in the large botanical gardens of Trinidad in the midst of which Government House stands. It used to be a great delight to me to watch the darting orioles flash past in all their golden beauty, and some lovely, brilliantly blue, birds were also occasionally to be seen among the trees. I was given some of these, but alas! they never lived in captivity, and after one or

two unsuccessful efforts I always let them out of the cage. The ubiquitous sparrow was there of course, and so was a rather larger black and yellow bird called the "qu'est-ce que dit?" from its incessant cry.

In these gardens the orioles built their large clumsy nests of dried grass without any precaution against surprises; but I was told that in the interior of the island, where snakes abound, the "corn-bird"—as he is called up-country—has found it expedient to hang his nest at the end of a sort of grass rope some six feet long. This forms a complete protection against snakes, as the rope is so slightly put together that no wise serpent would trust himself on it. Sometimes the oriole finds he has woven too large a nest, so he half fills it with leaves, but after heavy rains these make the structure so heavy that it often falls to the ground, and from this cause I became possessed of one or two of these nests with their six or eight feet of dangling rope. Anything so quaint as these numerous nests swinging from the topmost branches of lofty trees cannot well be imagined. It is impossible to reach them by climbing or in any other way except shooting away the slender straw rope, which rifle-feat might surely rank with winning the Queen's Prize at Bisley!

It has always interested me to examine birds' nests in the different colonies to which the wander-

ing star of my fate has led me, and I have observed a curious similarity between the houses made with and without hands. For instance, take a bird's nest in England, where human habitations are solid and carefully finished, and you will see an equal finish and solidity in the neatly constructed nest with its warm lining and lichen-decorated exterior. Then look at a bird's nest in a colony with its hastily constructed houses made of any slight and portable material. You will find the majority of birds' nests equally makeshift in character and style, just loosely put together anyhow with dried grass, and evidently only meant for temporary use. I saw one such nest of which the back must have tumbled out, for a fresh leaf had been neatly sewn over the large hole with fibre. In strong contrast, however, to such hastily constructed bird-dwellings was a nest of the "schnee-vögel" which came to me from the foot of the Drakenberg Mountains in Natal. Beautifully made of sheep's wool, it had all the consistency of fine felt. It was a small hanging nest, but what I delighted in was the little outside pocket in which the father of the family must have been wont to sit. The mouth of that nest was so exceedingly small that at first I thought that no bird bigger than a bee could possibly have fitted into it, but I found that it expanded quite easily, so elastic was the material. One could quite picture the domestic comfort,

especially in so cold and inhospitable a region, of that tiny *ménage*.

I always longed to make a journey to the north-west of Western Australia expressly to see the so-called "bower-bird" at play. This would have necessitated very early rising on my part, however, for only at dawn does this bird—not the true bower-bird, by any means—come out of his nest proper, and lie on his back near the heap of snail shells, &c. which he has collected in front of his hastily thrown-up wind-shelter, to play with his toys. It is marvellous the distance those birds will carry anything of a bright colour to add to their heap, and active quarrels over a brilliant leaf or berry have been observed. A shred of red flannel from some explorer's shirt or blanket is a priceless treasure to the bower-bird and eagerly annexed. But the wind-shelter of coarse grass always seemed to me quite as curious as the heap of playthings. The photographs show me these shelters as being somewhat pointed in shape, very large in proportion to the bird, and with an opening something like the side-door in a little old-fashioned English country church. This habit of hastily throwing up wind-shelters is not confined to this bird only. I was given some smaller birds from the interior of Western Australia, and at the season of the strong north-west gales—such a horrible, hot wind as that

was—I found my little birds loved to have a lot of hay thrown into their big cage with which in a single morning they would build a large construction resembling a huge nest, out of all proportion to their size. At first I thought it was an effort at nest-building, but as they constantly pulled it to pieces, and never used it except in a high wind, it was plain to see that their object was only to obtain a temporary shelter.

Next to the brilliant Gouldian finches, which, by the way, were called “painted finches” locally, I loved the small blue-eyed doves from the north-west of Australia better than any other of my feathered pets. These little darlings lived by themselves, and from the original pair given to me I reared a large and numerous family. They were gentle and sweet as doves should be, of a lovely pearl-grey plumage, with not only blue eyes, but large turquoise-blue wattles round them, so that the effect they made was indeed blue-eyed. They met with a tragic fate, for I turned some eight or ten pair loose in the large garden grounds of the Perth Government House. Alas! within a week of their being set at liberty not one was left. They were much too confidently tame to fend for themselves in this cold and cruel world. Half-wild cats ate some, hawks pounced on others, but the saddest of all the sudden deaths arose from their love of me. Whenever I was to be



seen, even inside the house, a dove would fly to me and dash itself against the plate-glass windows, falling dead in the verandah. They did not seem able to judge distance at all, and it was grievous to know they met their death through their devotion to their mistress and friend.

A dozen miles to windward, opposite the flourishing port of Freemantle, Western Australia, lies a little island with a lighthouse on it, known on charts and maps as Rottnest. It is astonishing what a difference of temperature those few miles out to sea make, and on this tiny islet was our delightful summer home, for one of the earliest governors had built, years before, a little stone house on a charming site looking across the bay.

I was comparatively petless over there, for I could not well drag large cages of birds about after me, when it was difficult enough to convey chickens and ducks across the somewhat stormy channel, so I hailed with delight the offer, made by a little island boy, of a half-fledged hawk, as tame as it is in a hawk's nature to be. There was no question of a cage, and I am sure "Alonzo" would not have submitted to such an indignity for a moment, so he was established on a perch in a sheltered corner of the upstairs verandah outside my bedroom door. I fed him at short intervals—for he was very voracious—with raw meat.

and he took rapid gulps from a saucer of water ; but he sat motionless on his perch all day, only coming on my hand for his meals. This went on for two or three weeks, when one morning at earliest daylight I heard an unusual noise in the verandah, and just got out in time to see my little hawk spreading his wings and sailing off into space. He had, however, been wise enough to devour all the meat left in readiness for his breakfast. Of course I gave him up for lost and went back to bed thinking sadly of the ingratitude and heartlessness of hawk nature. I certainly never expected to see my bird again, but a few hours later, as I was standing in the verandah, I stretched out my hand as far as I could reach, when lo ! the little hawk dropped like a stone from the cloudless blue and sat on my arm as composedly as if he had never left the shelter of his home. It is needless to say that the return of the prodigal called forth the same rapturous greeting and good dinner as of yore. After that it became an established custom that I should every evening put a saucer of chopped-up raw meat on a table in the verandah just outside my window, and a pannikin of water to serve for the hawk's early breakfast, but he foraged for himself all day, coming back at dusk to roost in the verandah. It was curious to watch his return, for he generally made many attempts before he could hit off the

exact slope of the roof so as to get beneath it. After each failure he would soar away out of sight, but only to return and circle round the house until he had determined how low to stoop, and then like a flash he darted beneath the projecting eaves. Apparently it was necessary to make but the one effort, for there was no popping in and out or uncertainty, just one majestic swoop, and he would be on his perch, as rigid and unruffled as though he had never left it.

When our delicious summer holiday was over, and the day of return to the mainland fixed, it became an anxious question what to do with the hawk. To take him with us was of course out of the question, but to leave him behind was heart-rending. Not only should I miss the accustomed clatter of saucer and pannikin at earliest streak of dawn, but not once did I ever hold my hand out during the day that he did not drop on it at once. He never could have been far off, although no eye could follow him into the deep blue dome where he seemed to live, poised in the dazzling sunshiny air. But "Alonzo" settled the question for himself a couple of days before we left, by suddenly deserting his old home and leaving his breakfast untouched. We watched in vain for his return on two successive evenings, nor did he drop on my hand for the last two days of our stay. I then remembered that on the last evening

he had come home to roost I had noticed another hawk with him, and rather wondered if he intended to set up an establishment in the verandah. But I suppose the bride-elect found fault with the situation, and probably said that, though well enough for a bachelor, it was not suitable for the upbringing of a family, and so the new home had to be started in a more secluded spot, and the sheltering roof knew its wild guest no more.

I am afflicted with a cockatoo! I can't "curse him and cast him out," for in the first place I love him dearly, and in the next he is a sort of orphan grandchild towards whom I have serious duties and responsibilities. And then he arrived at such a moment, when every heart was softened by the thought of the Soudan Campaign with its frightful risks and dangers. How could one turn away a suppliant cockatoo who suddenly and unexpectedly presented himself on the eve of the Battle of Omdurman, with a ticket to say his owner had gone up to the front and he was left homeless in Cairo? It would have been positively brutal, and then he was the friendliest of birds! No shyness or false pride about *him*. He had already invited my pretty little cook to "kiss him and love him," and was paying the housemaid extravagant compliments when I appeared on the scene. To say he flew into his

grandmother's arms is but feebly to express the dutiful warmth of his greeting. In less than ten minutes that artful bird had taken complete possession of the small household, and assumed his place as its head and master. Ever since that moment he has reigned supreme, and I foresee that he will always so reign.

But he certainly is the most mischievous and destructive of his mischievous species. Nothing is safe from his sudden and unexpected fits of energy. I first put him in a little conservatory where he had light and air, and the cheerful society of other birds. This plan, however, only worked for two or three days. One Sunday morning I was awakened by ear-piercing shrieks and yells from Master Cockie, only slightly softened by distance. These went on for some time until I perceived a gradual increase of their jubilant note, which I felt sure betokened mischief, so I hastily got myself into a dressing-gown and slippers and started off to investigate what trouble was "toward." It was so early that the glass doors were still shut, and I was able to contemplate Master Cockie's manœuvres unseen. The floor of the little greenhouse was strewn with fern-leaves, for gardening, or rather pruning, had evidently been his first idea. The door of his travelling cage—which I had left overnight securely fastened—lay flat on the pavement, and Cockie with extended wings

was solemnly executing a sort of *pas seul* in front of another cage divided by partitions, in which dwelt a goldfinch and a bullfinch side by side. Both doors were wide open and the bullfinch's compartment was empty, but the goldfinch was crouched, paralysed with terror, on the floor of his abode. He evidently wanted to get out very badly, but did not dare to pass the yelling doorkeeper, who apparently was inviting the trembling little bird to come forth. The instant the artful villain perceived me, he affected perfect innocence and harmlessness, returning instantly to his cage, and commencing his best performance of a flock of sheep passing, doubtless in order to distract my attention. How could one scold with deserved severity a mimic who took off not only the barking dogs and bleating sheep, but the very shuffle of their feet, and the despairing cry of a lost lamb. And he pretended great joy when the bullfinch—more dead than alive—at last emerged from the shelter of a thick creeper where he had found sanctuary, asking repeatedly after his health in persuasive tones.

I gave up the cage after that and established him on a smart stand in the dining-room window; for I found that the birds in the conservatory literally could not bear the sight of him. A light chain securely fastened on his leg promised safety, but he contrived to get within reach of my new

curtains and rapidly devoured some half-yard or so of a hand-painted border which was the pride of my heart. Then came an interval of calm and exemplary behaviour which lulled me into a false security. Cockie seemed to have but one object in life, which was to pull out all his own feathers, and by evening the dining-room often looked as though a white fowl had been plucked in it. I consulted a bird doctor, but as Cockie's health was perfectly good, and his diet all that could be recommended, it was supposed he only plucked himself for want of occupation, and firewood was recommended as a substitute. This answered very well, and he spent his leisure in gnawing sticks of deal; only when no one chanced to be in the room he used to unfasten the swivel of his chain, leave it dangling on the stand, and descend in search of his playthings. When the fire had not been lighted I often found half the coals pulled out of the grate, and the firewood in splinters. At last, with warmer weather, both coals and wood were removed, so the next time Master Cockie found himself short of a job he set to work on the dining-room chairs, first pulled out all their bright nails, and next tore holes in the leather, through which he triumphantly dragged the stuffing!

At one time he went on a visit for some weeks and ate up everything within his reach in that friendly establishment. His "bag" for one after-

noon consisted of a venerable fern and a large palm, some library books, newspapers, a pack of cards, and an armchair. And yet every one adores him, and he is the spoiled child of more than one family.



## XVIII

### HUMOURS OF BIRD LIFE

*"Birds in their little nests agree."*

DR. WATTS, though doubtless an excellent and estimable divine, must have had but little experience of the ways and manners of birds when he wrote this oft-quoted line. Birds are really the most quarrelsome and pugnacious creatures amongst themselves, though they are capable of great affection and amiability towards the human beings who befriend them.

I have always been a passionate bird-lover, and have had opportunities of keeping, in what I hope and believe has been a comfortable captivity, many and various kinds of birds in different lands. My first experience of an aviary on a large and luxurious scale was in Mauritius, many years ago, and was brought about by the gift of a magnificent and enormous cage, elaborately carved by Arab workmen. It was more like a small temple than anything else. But the first steps to be taken were to make it, so to speak, bird-proof, for the ambitious architect had left many openings in

his various minarets and turrets, through which birds could easily have escaped.

Regarded as a cage it was not a success, for it was really difficult to see the birds through the profuse ornamentation of the panelled sides. However, I stood it in a wide and sunny verandah, and proceeded to instal the birds I already possessed in this splendid dwelling. I had brought some beautiful little blue and fawn-coloured finches from Madeira, and I had a few canaries. Gifts of other birds soon arrived from all quarters; a sort of half-bred canary from Aden—there were a dozen of those—and many pretty little local birds. I made them as happy as I could with endless baths, and gave them, besides the ordinary bird seed, bunches of native grasses, and even weeds in blossom, which they greedily ate. The little Aden birds would not look at water for bathing purposes. They came from a "dry and thirsty land, where no water is," and evidently regarded it as a precious beverage to be kept for drinking. They had to be accommodated with little heaps of finely powdered earth, in which they disported themselves bath-fashion, to the deep amazement of the other birds.

But how those birds quarrelled! At roosting-time they all seemed to want one particular spot on one particular perch, and nothing else would do. All day long they quarrelled over their baths

and their food, and the only advantage of the ample space they enjoyed was to give them more room to chase each other about. They all insisted on using one especial bath at the same moment, and would not look at any other, though all the baths were exactly alike. One fine day a batch of tiny parrakeets from a neighbouring island arrived, and I congratulated myself on having at last acquired some amiable members of my bird community. Such gentle creatures were never seen. With their pale-green plumage and the little grey-hooded heads which easily explained their name of "capuchin," they made themselves quite happy in one of the many domes or cupolas of the Arab cage. In a few days, however, a mysterious ailment broke out among all the other birds. Nearly every bird seemed suddenly to prefer going about on one leg. This did not surprise me very much at first, as the mosquitoes used to bite their little legs cruelly, and I was always contriving net curtains, &c., to keep these pests out. At last it dawned on me that many of the canaries had actually only one leg. An hour's careful watching showed me a parrakeet sidling up to a canary, and after feigning to be deeply absorbed in its own toilet, preening each gay wing-feather most carefully, the little wretch would give a sudden swift nip at the slender leg of its neighbour, and absolutely bite it off then and there. Of course

I immediately turned the capuchins out of the cage with much obloquy, but too late to save several of my poor little pets from a one-legged existence.

I had also several parrots and cockatoos, but they had to be kept as much as possible out of earshot, for their eldritch yells and shrieks were too great an addition to the burden of daily life in a tropic land.

There was one small grey and red parrot, however, from the West Coast of Africa, which was different from the ordinary screaming green and yellow bird. This was certainly the cleverest little creature of its kind I have ever seen. Dingy and shabby as to plumage, and with a twisted leg, its powers of mimicry were unsurpassed. It picked up everything it heard directly, and my only regret was that it appeared to forget its phrases very quickly. Before it had been two days in the house it took me in half-a-dozen times by imitating exactly the impatient peck at a glass door of some tame peacocks, who always invited themselves to "five o'clock-er." I used to go to the door and open it; of course to find no peacocks there, for they were punctuality itself, and never came near the house at any other time. After the pecks—exactly reproduced as if on glass—came an impatient note, followed by the exact cry of an indignant peacock. I believe

that grey parrot had the utmost contempt for my mental powers, and delighted in victimising me.

I was a constant sufferer in those days from malarial fever, and when convalescent and comfortably settled on my sofa in the drawing-room, the parrot would first gently cough once or twice, then sigh, and finally, in a weak voice, call "Garde, Garde." This was to a functionary who lived in the deep verandahs, and whose mission in life seemed to be the regulating of the heavy outside blinds made of split bamboo. The next sound would be the awkward shuffling of heavy boots (for the "Garde" usually went barefoot, except when in uniform and on duty), followed by "Madame." Then my voice again, "Levez le rideau." "Bien, Grande Madame." Then you heard the creak of the pulleys as the curtain was raised, followed by the Garde's tramping away again, all exactly imitated.

The A.D.C.'s way of calling his "boy" (generally a middle-aged man) was also faithfully rendered, beginning in a very mild and amiable voice, rising louder as no "boy" answered, and finally a stentorian "boy" produced a very frightened and hurried "'Ci, Monsieur le Capitaine, 'ci." I grieve to say this performance generally ended with a confused and shuffling sound as of a scrimmage.

There used also to be an orderly on duty outside the Governor's office, who, once upon a time,

was afflicted with a violent cold in his head. This malady, and his primitive methods of dealing with it, made him a very unpleasant neighbour, so his Excellency requested the Private Secretary to ask for another orderly *without* a cold in his head. Of course this was immediately done, and the desired change made, but not before Miss Polly had taken notes. Next day I was startled by the most violent outburst of sneezing and coughing in the verandah, followed by other trying sounds. I next heard a plaintive and deeply injured voice from the Governor's office—it must be remembered that every door and window is always wide open in a tropic house.

“I thought I asked for that man to be changed.”

This brought the Private Secretary hurriedly out of his room, to be confronted by a small grey parrot, who wound up the performance by a sort of sob of exhaustion, and “Ah! mon Dieu!” the real orderly standing by, looking as if he was considering whether or no he ought to arrest the culprit.

One likes to have parrots walking about quite tame, free and unfettered, but it is an impossibility if a garden or any plants are within reach, for the temptation to go round and nip off every leaf and blossom, and even stem, seems irresistible to a parrot or a cockatoo.

Soon after I went to Western Australia, in 1883,

I was given a pair of beautiful cockatoos called by the natives "Jokolokals." They did not talk at all, but were lovely to look at, and as they had never been kept in a cage and were reared from the nest, they were perfectly tame and their plumage most beautiful, of a soft creamy white, with crest and wing-lining of an indescribable flame tint. I never saw such exquisite colouring, and they looked charming on the grass terraces during the day, and for a while roosted peaceably in a low tree at night.

But one morning, early, I was told the head-gardener wished to speak to me, and he was with difficulty induced to postpone the interview until after breakfast. I tremble to think what the expression of that grim Scotch countenance would have been at first! It was quite severe enough when I had to confront him a couple of hours later. The Jokolokals had employed a long bright moonlight night in gardening among the plants with which the many angles and corners of the wide verandahs were filled, and such utter ruin as they had wrought, especially among the camellias! Not only had every blossom been nipped off, but they had actually gnawed the stems through, and few pots presented more than an inch or two of stalk to my horrified eyes. After that—on the principle of the steed and the stable-door—the beautiful villains were put in a large aviary

out of doors, and revenged themselves by awaking me every morning at daylight by fiendish yells. The gardener's cottage was out of earshot.

I had also a very large cage of canaries, in which they lived and multiplied exceedingly. In a country where there are no song-birds a canary is much prized, and every year I gave away a great many young birds. There was also another large cage with small (and very quarrelsome) finches, including many brilliant Gouldian finches from the North-west (they call them Painted finches there), a tiny zebra-marked finch, and many different little birds kindly brought to me from Singapore and other places.

However, to return for a moment to the cockatoos. The large white Albany cockatoo, which has a very curved beak and wide pale-blue wattles round the eye, talks admirably, and is easily tamed if taken young. In spite of its ferocious beak it is really quite gentle, and mine—for I had several—were only too affectionate, insisting on more petting and notice than I always had time to bestow.

There were often garden-parties in the lovely grounds of the Government House at Perth, and at one of the later ones some of my guests came to me complaining, as it were, of the weird utterances of the Albany cockatoo, who lived with other parrots in a kind of wire pagoda among the vines. "What does he say?" I asked laughingly. "He



wants to know if we like birds," was the answer. So I immediately went down to the cage, and was at once asked by the cockatoo in a very earnest voice, "Do you like birds?" Alas for the want of originality in the human race! He had heard exactly that remark made by *every* couple who came up to the cage, and had adopted it. My little son taught that bird to call me "Mother," and it never used the word to any one else. If I ever passed the cage without stopping to play with or pet the cockatoos, I was greeted with indignant cries of "Mother," which generally brought me back, and the moment I opened the door the big cockatoo would throw himself on his back on the gravel floor, that I might put the point of my shoe on his breast and rub his back up and down the gravel. I never could understand why they all loved that mode of petting.

But the Australian magpie is one of the most delightful pets, and can be trusted to walk about loose, as he does not garden. "Break-of-day-boys" is their local name, and it fits them admirably. At earliest dawn only do you hear the sweet clear whistle which is their native note. They learn to whistle tunes easily and correctly, but nothing can be compared to their own note. They are exactly like the English magpie in appearance, only a little larger. I had a very tame one, which had been taught to lie on its back on

a plate with its legs held stiffly up as if it were dead. I have a photograph of it in that attitude, and no one will believe me when I assure them the bird was alive ; not even its open and roguish eye will convince them. I only wish the sceptics had been by when I clapped my hands to signify that the performance was over, and Mag jumped up like a flash of lightning and made for the nearest human foot, into the instep of which she would dig her bill viciously. It must have been her idea of revenge, for she never did so at any other time ; and she scattered the spectators pretty swiftly, I assure you.

Dear, clever Mag was lost or stolen just before we left Perth. I intended to have brought her to England, but one morning I was informed by the sentry that he could not see her anywhere, and she always kept near him. Further and anxious inquiries elicited that she had been observed following a newspaper boy near the back-gate. The police were communicated with, and the result was my being confronted at all hours of the day and night by an indignant and rumped magpie tied up in a pocket-handkerchief, who loudly protested that we were absolute strangers to each other. And so we were, for among the numerous arrests made of suspicious characters among magpies, not one turned out to be my poor Maggie.

But I must not loiter too long over my West

Australian aviary, in spite of the great temptation to dwell on those dear distant days. I brought a small travelling-cage of Gouldian and other lovely finches from the neighbourhood of Cambridge Gulf home with me. What I suffered with that cage during a storm in the Bay of Biscay no tongue can tell. However, they all reached London in safety, and in due time were taken out—also with great personal trouble and difficulty—to Trinidad. Here they were luxuriously established in four large wired compartments over the great porch of Government House. No birds could have been happier. The finches had one compartment all to themselves, so had the canaries; whilst the laughing jackass, another Australian magpie, and a beautiful Indian hill mynah occupied a third compartment, the fourth being brilliantly filled by troupials, morichés, and sewing crows from Venezuela, besides many lovely local birds of exquisite plumage.

In each compartment stood large boxes and tubs filled with growing shrubs, whilst creepers, brought up from the luxuriant growth at the pillars below, were twined in the fine meshes of the netting. Of course there were perches and nests, all sizes and at differing heights. It was really one man's business to attend to them, but they were beautifully kept. Every morning the grasscutter brought in a large bunch of the waving

plume-like seed of the tall guinea grass ; and they had plenty of fresh fruit, in which they greatly delighted. Of course they quarrelled over it all, and a fierce battle would rage over half an orange, of which the other half was utterly neglected.

The canaries led a commonplace existence and had only one adventure. I had noticed that for some few weeks past the numbers of these little birds seemed rather to diminish than increase at their usual rapid rate. But I saw so many hens sitting on nests very high up that I accounted for the small number in that way. However, one day a perch fell down, and the black attendant went into the cage with a tall ladder to replace it. Presently I heard a great scrimmage and many "Hi! my king!" and other agitated ejaculations, which soon brought me to the spot. It was indeed no wonder that my poor little birds had been disappearing mysteriously, for there was a large, well-fed, but harmless snake. It must have got in through the mesh when quite young and small, but had now grown to such stout proportions that escape through the wire netting—which would only admit the very tip of my fourth finger—was impossible, and it was easily slain. The snake was found coiled on a ledge too high up to be easily perceived from below.

Soon after that episode the little finches underwent a sad and startling experience. One morning

the coachman brought me in a beautiful little bird of brilliant plumage which I had never seen before. It had been caught in the saddle-room, and was certainly a lovely creature, though unusually wild and terrified. However, I was so accustomed to new arrivals soon making themselves perfectly at home and becoming quite tame, that I turned the splendid stranger into the finches' compartment with no misgivings, and went away, leaving them to make friends, as I hoped. About half-an-hour later I passed the tall French window, carefully netted in, which opened on the corridor, and through which I could always watch my little pets unperceived. My attention was attracted by two or three curious little feathered lumps on the gravelled floor. On closer examination these proved to be the heads of some of my especial favourites, which the new arrival (a member of the Shrike family, as I discovered too late) had hastily twisted off. Besides these murders he had found time to go round the nests and turn out all the eggs and young birds. My dismay and horror may be imagined, but I could not stop, for luncheon and guests were waiting. I hastily begged a tall Irish orderly who was on duty in the hall to catch the new-comer and let him go. Now this man loved my birds quite as much as I did, and seemed to spend all his leisure-time in foraging for them. They owed him many tit-bits in the shape of

wasps' larvæ or the nursery of an ants' nest nicely stocked, or some delicacy of that sort. There was only time for a hurried order, received in grim silence, but when I was once more free and able to inquire how matters had been settled, all I could get out of O'Callaghan was: "I've larned him to wring little birds' necks."

"Did you catch him easily?" I inquired.

"Quite easily, my lady, and I larned him." This in a voice trembling with rage.

"What have you done to him?" No answer at first, only a murmur.

"But I want to know what has happened to that bird," I persisted.

"Well, my lady, I've larned him;"—a pause;  
"I've wrunged *his* neck."

So in this way rough and ready justice had been meted out to the wrong-doer very speedily.

Perhaps of all my birds the one I called the Sewing Crow was the most amusing. It was a glossy black bird about the size of a thrush, with pale yellow tail and wing-feathers, and curious light blue eyes with very blue rims. It was brought from Venezuela, and its local Spanish name means "The Rice-bird," but it never specially affected rice as food, preferring fruit and mealworms. I had several of these crows, but one was particularly tame, and rambled about the house seeking for sewing materials. I found it once or twice *inside*

a large workbag full of crewels, where it had gone in search of gay threads, with which it used to decorate the wire walls of an empty cage kept in the verandah outside my own sitting-room. The extraordinary patience and ingenuity of that bird in passing the wool through the meshes of the wire can hardly be described. I suppose it was a reminiscence of nest-building, because it always worked harder in the springtime. It had a great friend in a little "moriché," black and yellow also, but of a more slender build, and with a very sweet whistle. The "moriché," too, was perfectly tame and flew all about the house, and it was very comic to watch its efforts at learning embroidery from its friend. It arrived at last at some sort of cage decoration, but quite different from that of the crow, who evidently disapproved of it, and often ruthlessly pulled the work of a laborious morning on the "moriché's" part to pieces. Now the "moriché" knew better than to touch the crow's work, though he often appeared to carefully examine it.

One day the crow must have persuaded the moriché to help him to roll and drag a reel of coarse white cotton from the corridor of the work-room, across the floor of my sitting-room, into the verandah. I saw them doing this more than once, and had unintentionally interfered with the crow's plans by picking up the reel and returning

it to the maids' work-basket. However, one afternoon the crow got rid of me entirely, and on my return from a long expedition I found both the crow and moriché just going to roost in the empty cage, which was really only kept there for them to play in. I then perceived what the reel of cotton, which was again lying on the verandah floor, had been wanted for. The crow had sewn a straw armchair with an open-patterned seat securely to the cage by nine very long strands, and was sleepily contemplating the work with great satisfaction. It was quite easy to see how it had been managed once a start was made with the cotton ; but it must have entailed a great deal of flying in and out with the end of the cotton, for it had not been broken off. Of course I left the chair in its place, and it remained untouched for some months ; but I always had to use it myself, lest any one should move it too roughly, and so break the connecting strands which had cost my little bird so much labour and trouble.

The most popular of my birds, however, was certainly the laughing jackass, who dwelt in company with the magpie and the mynah. Unhappily a misunderstanding arose, when I was away in England, between these two birds, once such great friends. If I had only been there to adjust the quarrel, all might have gone well ; but the magpie, after many days of incessant battle, I was told,



fell upon the mynah and killed it. It was curious that they should have lived together for a couple of years without more than the ordinary share of bird-quarrels. I do not know what active share the jackass took in this affair. I always doubted his intentions towards that mynah, and he always regarded it with a bad expression of eye, but as he was very slow and cumbrous of movement I thought the mynah could well take care of himself. The only time the laughing jackass ever showed agility was when a mouse-trap with a live mouse in it was taken into his cage. With every feather bristling he would watch for the door of the trap to be opened, when he pounced on the darting mouse quicker than the eye could follow, and killed and swallowed it with the greatest rapidity. Once a mouse escaped him, and the magpie caught it instead, and a more absurd sight could not be imagined than the magpie flitting from perch to perch, holding the mouse securely in his beak, through which he was at the same time trying hard to whistle; whilst the jackass lumbered heavily after him, remonstrating loudly, for the magpie did not want to eat the mouse, and he did.

It always amused me to see the jackass take his bath, though it was rather a rare performance, whereas all the other birds tubbed incessantly. I had a large tin basin full of water placed just beneath one of the lowest perches, and when the

jackass intended to bathe he descended cautiously to this perch and eyed the water for some time, uttering—with head well thrown back—his melancholy laugh. As soon as his courage was equal to it he suddenly flopped into the water, as if by accident, and then scrambled hastily out again. After repeating these dips many times he seemed to think he had done all that was necessary in the washing line, and scrambled up to a sunny corner where he could dry and preen his beautiful plumage.

Yes, my birds were the greatest delight and amusement to me for many years, and I had nearly a hundred of them when my happy life in that beautiful tropical home came to a sad and abrupt end. Many of my friends have often asked me if I did not regret leaving my birds ; but as I left everything that the world could hold for me in the way of happiness and interest and work behind me at the same time, the loss of the birds did not make itself felt just then. I miss them more now than I did at first, but I believe they have nearly all found kind and happy homes, where they are cherished a little for my sake as well as for their own, the dear things !

## XIX

### GIRLS—OLD, AND NEW

"COMPARISONS are odious" we know, but yet when one gets past middle age one is constantly invited to make them.

My life is brightened and cheered by many girl friends, and there is nothing about which they show a more insatiable curiosity than my own girlhood.

I think it is the going back so constantly to that distant time, and being forced by my imperious pets to drag every detail out of the pigeon-holes of memory, which has impressed so forcibly on me the superiority of the modern girl.

I began to answer their questions with the full intention of proving to the contrary, but alas, in the course of the talks, I often felt how heavily handicapped we had been. I am afraid the first point upon which I had to dilate was our clothes, the description of which always provoked peals of laughter. It is to be presumed that pretty women set the fashions and that they suited them, but the rigour of the fashion laws prescribed that every

one should wear exactly and precisely the same gown or bonnet, with, of course, disastrous results as to appearance. Then we all had to dress our hair in precisely the same way. The ears especially were treated as though they were monstrous deformities, and had to be carefully concealed. What the modern girls find most difficult to believe is that these same fashions lasted for three or four years without the slightest change, so there was no escape from an unbecoming garment. Of course I impressed upon my laughing audience, with all the dignity at my command, that we looked extremely nice, and at all events were quite contented with our appearance.

If I could not defend the colours and cut of the material provided for our bodies, still less could I champion the diet prescribed for our minds. Looking back on it all I see there was the same cardinal error; the want of recognition of any individuality. As in our frocks so in our studies, no allowance whatever used to be made for our different natures. In fact, the great aim of every mother and teacher was to make her girl exactly and precisely like every other girl. No matter in what direction your tastes and talents lay, you had to plod through the same list of what was called "accomplishments." The very word was a misnomer, for nothing was really accomplished. A girl's education was supposed to be quite "finished "

(Heaven save the mark ! ) at about sixteen or seventeen, but if she were studiously inclined, or even dimly suspected that she had not exhausted all the treasures of knowledge, she would have found it difficult to pursue any course of study. And the idleness of that stage of girlhood was one of its greatest dangers. A reaction from the practical days of our own grandmothers had set in, and there was no still-room, or work-room, or any branch of domestic education to which we could turn to find an outlet for our energies.

A girl with any musical talent could of course go on practising, and had a chance of achieving something, but art education must have been at its lowest ebb half a century ago. It is difficult to believe that a "drawing class" of that day generally consisted of a dozen girls or so meeting at the house of some rising or even well-known artist. The great point seemed to be his *name*. Drawing materials and every other facility, except instruction, used to be provided by our "master." Perhaps the poor man recognised the hopelessness of his task, but he certainly let us severely alone even in our choice of subjects. We were only asked to copy other drawings, and I well remember selecting, as my first attempt at painting, a most ambitious sketch of a pretty Irish colleen with a pitcher on her head emerging from a ruined archway. I dashed in her red petticoat and blue

cloak with great vigour, but took little pains with her uplifted arm or bare legs. They must indeed have been curious anatomical studies, for I recollect the master heaving a deep sigh, if not a groan, as I presented my drawing for his criticism. But he made no attempt whatever to teach me how to do better, only took possession of my picture, kept it a few days and returned it—what was called “corrected,” though we never knew where our faults lay.

Our “fancy work” was truly hideous also, and as useless as it was ugly. It makes one’s heart ache to think of the terrible waste of time and eyesight which our awful performances in wool work and crotchet entailed. Hardly any girl was taught to do plain sewing, and I really think one of my keenest pangs of regret for my misspent youth in the way of needlework was caused the other day, by my youngest girl friend telling me that at her school she was taught to cut out and make a whole set of baby clothes, as well as garments for older children.

Our amusements were few and far between, but we took to them a freshness and keenness of enjoyment which I suspect is often lacking in the much amused damsel of the present day. But then, on the other hand, “vapours” had gone out of fashion, and “nerves” had not yet been invented, so one never heard of rest cures being prescribed for young matrons!

I am thankful to say that the day of tight lacing and small appetites was over before I became aware of the dangers I had escaped, but I remember the pity with which I listened to my poor young mother's stories of how she was required to hold on to the bedpost while her maid laced her stays, and how she often fainted after she was dressed.

I am often asked what exercise we were allowed to take. We rode a great deal, though girls were hardly ever seen in the hunting field, and I wonder we survived a ride on a country road, considering that our habits almost swept the ground. We had no out-door game except croquet, which was just coming into fashion, and was pursued with a frenzy quite equal to that evoked by ping-pong or any other modern craze. Of course, there was always walking and dancing, though over the latter there still hung a faint trace of the stately movements of the generation before us. We all did elaborate steps in the quadrille, and although the waltz was firmly established in the ball-rooms of my youth, it was a slow measure compared to the modern rush across the room. The polka woke us all up, and we hailed its pretty and picturesque figures with enthusiasm.

I often hear of the iniquities of girls of the present day, but I don't come across those specimens, and I confess that I honestly believe the modern

girl, as I know her, to be a very great improvement on the early Victorian maiden. To begin with, she is much nicer and prettier to look at, because she can suit her dress and her *coiffure* to her individuality. Then she is not so dreadfully shy—not to say *gauche*, as we were, because she is not kept in the school-room until the hour before she is launched into society, as ignorant of its ways as if she had dropped from the moon.

I distinctly remember being reproached for my want of "knowledge of the world," when I had not even the faintest idea what the phrase meant. When I came to understand it, it seemed a rather unreasonable criticism, for I certainly should have been regarded with horror had I made any attempt to acquire such knowledge on my own account.

Now—so far as my experience goes—the up-to-date girl has pretty and pleasant manners, and is not secretly terrified if a new acquaintance speaks to her. She is more sure of herself, and has the confidence of custom, for she has probably been her mother's companion out of school hours. I fear girls are not quite as respectful and obedient to their elders as we used to be, although the days of "Honoured Madam" and "Sir" had passed away with the generation before mine. Still the modern mother seems quite content with her pretty girl, and it is often difficult to distinguish



between them, but I always observe the daughter is the most proud and delighted if "Mummie" is taken for her elder sister.

Then the New Girl is so companionable. Her education has been conducted on very different lines to ours, and she does not dream of giving up her studies because she is no longer obliged to pursue them. Her individual tastes have been given a chance of asserting themselves, and I am often told of "work" gone on with at home. In fact her education has really taught her how to go on educating herself. Of course I am speaking of intelligent girls, and I am happy to think they are far more numerous than they were even one generation ago. There will always be frivolous, empty-headed girls, but with even them I confess I find it very difficult to be properly angry, as they are generally so pretty and coaxing.

The delightful classes and lectures on all subjects and in all languages now so common were unknown in my day, to say nothing of the numerous aids to difficult branches of knowledge. Even history was offered to us in so unattractive a form that although we swallowed, so to speak, a good deal of it, we digested little or none. Poetry was generally regarded as dangerous mental food, and, perhaps to our starved natures, it may have been. Our reading was most circumscribed, and everything was Bowdlerised as much as possible. I am

not sure, however, that miscellaneous reading does not begin too soon now, and certainly I am often astonished at the books very, very young girls are allowed to read. In this respect I confess I think the old way safer, to say the least of it.

In considering the subject of the new ways of girls, however, one must bear in mind how many more girls there now are, and that marriage is not the invariable destiny of every pretty or charming girl one meets. The consequence is girls certainly do not talk and think of future or possible husbands as much as they used to a couple of generations ago. Such talk was quite natural and harmless under the old conditions, but I must say it seems healthier and nicer that now it should be the merits of the favourite "bike," or the last "ripping" run, or the varying fortunes of golf or hockey, or even croquet, which claims their attention when they get together. I often wonder how a man could have encumbered himself with any of us as his life's companion! It is true that he had not any option, but still we must have been rather trying. I know of one girl who amazed her husband by appearing before him the first Sunday morning after their marriage, with her Prayer Book, which she handed to him with the utmost gravity, and standing up with her hands clasped behind her back, in true school-girl fashion,

proceeded to rattle off the collect, epistle, and gospel for the day, having no idea she was doing anything the least unusual !

The only comfort I have in looking back on our crudeness and ignorance is that we were really good girls. That is to say we were trained to be unselfish, and certainly we were obedient and docile, though in many ways what would now be called silly. Still, we were as pure minded and innocent as babes, and quite as unworldly. No doubt this white-souled state sprang from crass ignorance, but who shall say that it was not good to keep us from tasting the fruit of that terrible Tree of Knowledge as long as possible ?

"You must have been dears," is the verdict with which a talk of these distant days is often ended by my laughing critics. And I feel inclined to say, "Well, and you are dears, too," so I suppose that is the real solution of the question.

THE END



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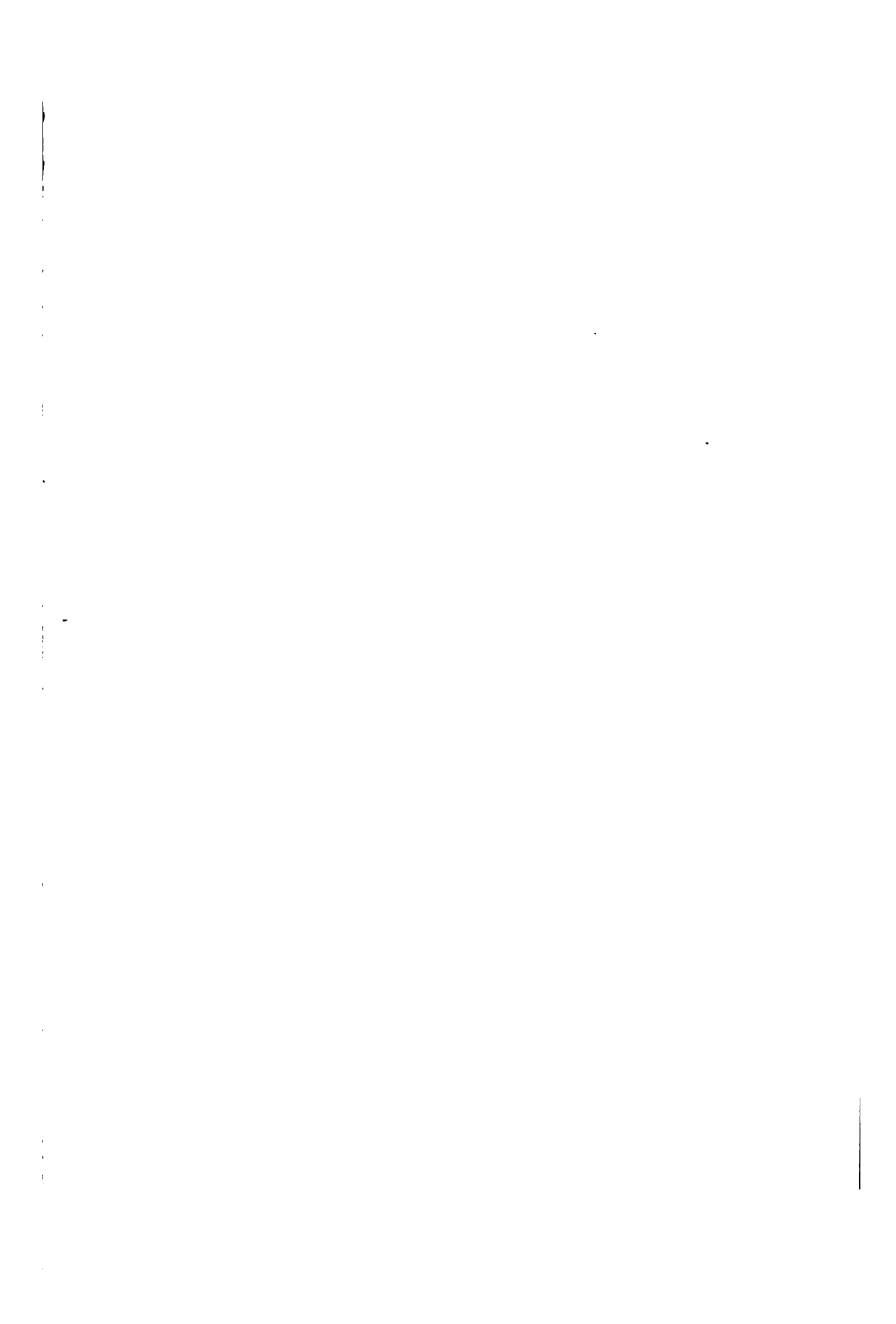
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